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❁ FROM A
SOUTHERN
PORCH ❁

By DOROTHY
SCARBOROUGH

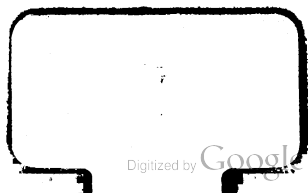


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From A Southern Porch

By

Dorothy Scarborough

Author of "Fugitive Verses," "The Supernatural in Modern
English Fiction," etc.

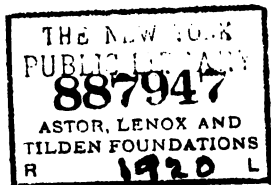


ALL THE
WORKS
OF
DOROTHY SCARBOROUGH

G. P. Putnam's Sons
New York and London
The Knickerbocker Press

1919

M.S.M.



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BY
DOROTHY SCARBOROUGH

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To

ALL THOSE ON WHOSE PORCHES
I HAVE SPENT PLEASANT HOURS

Putnam. 1 Dec 12

FOREWORD

BOOKS in abundance have been written about houses and the people who live in them, as there are various volumes concerning gardens and the joys of digging in the patient earth. But nobody has written a book about porches, which seems to me monstrous ingratitude. For how many works of literature have been composed on porches or inspired by them! How often has Pegasus got a famous start from some rocking-chair on a dreamy veranda! And how many stodgy books there are, which might have leaped and run, filled with vinous life, if only they had been porch-written!

The porch is the soul of a house. Poor and spiritless indeed is that structure which lacks it. Only compare a colonial mansion with its noble piazza, with the stooped and cowering city dwelling, and judge how different must be the life that goes on inside the two. Small wonder that city houses, conscious of the moral indignity of their appearance, huddle together in shame like criminals

seeking to hide themselves in a crowd. Fancy a man's having to ask of his own latchkey which is his house!—of a latchkey subject, moreover, to moments of midnight exhilaration wherein it mocks its questioner. Imagine going right into a house, with no gracious lingering on a porch! Or of stepping out of the door to find oneself on the alien pavement! Such procedure outrages all the amenities of life. True gentility is inseparable from a porch. Somewhere in the past of every courtly soul will be found a benignant porch, stretching its influence over the years.

This, then, is a tribute of love to porches, and meant only for the eyes of fellow-porchers, not at all for the critical gaze of folk who sit shut up in houses. The colored people in Virginia have a saying that all kinds of meat are to be found in the turtle's flesh. This volume might be considered mock-turtle's meat, for it is a joyous, irresponsible jumble of things I like, what Aunt Mandy would call "a mixtry." It has written itself with tongue acheek, breaking all the laws I know of unity, coherence, and continuity, and should be read on a friendly Southern porch.

The "ballets" and "reels" included here are given just as they were taken down from dusky

lips in Texas and Virginia. They are genuine negro folk songs, not "cooked" or edited in any way, and, so far as I can learn, have not been previously published.

**RICHMOND, VIRGINIA,
July, 1919.**

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From a Southern Porch

I

THE PORCHER

DURING the summer I am a porcher. My occupation is not so bad as it sounds, however, being not at all burglarious, for I am not a climber but a sitter. During the long, delightful summer, I do nothing but sit on a porch by the side of the road and watch the world go by, what time I am not lying on a swinging couch. The verb *porch*, not yet included in Sir James Murray's otherwise complete English dictionary, means to live on a porch. According to etymological analogy, it is an impeccably constructed word, and a *porcher* is one who lives on a porch. Compare it with *farmer*, *rancher*, *scholar*, and so forth, and you will recognize its right to existence. Porching may seem to some a parlous task, an occupation in-

active, devoid of thrills, but not so to me. It has its joys for those who know to snatch them—and personally, I've always been considered a pretty good snatcher!

I must porch steadily in the summer, because it is only in vacations that I may indulge in this enterprise dear to my body and my soul. In fall, winter, and spring, my life is very different, delightful, it is true, but antipodic to this. At those seasons I live elsewhere, on a certain densely, highly, and variously populated island, but I do not think of it as my home. My real home could never be a place where one sits decorously inside steam-heated—or worse still, *not* steam-heated—walls. My soul cries out for porches, for rocking-chairs and white dresses, for the wide spaces of old Virginia gardens. Oh, those gardens of old Virginia,—how their beauty wrings my heart!

Porching, in the real sense of the word, cannot be done in the gregarious rockers on hotel piazzas, where idle women crochet industriously and embroider linen and the truth about their neighbors. On the contrary, it is a high calling apart. In the South the porch is the true center of the home, around which life flows on gently and graciously, with an open reserve, a charming

candor. One does not stay inside the house more than is absolutely necessary, for all such pleasant occupations as eating and sleeping, reading, studying, working, and entertaining one's friends are carried on on some companionable piazza or other. There are porches to meet all needs, all moods, and all hours. As the sun travels, one migrates from porch to porch, though there are some widely shaded verandas that are inhabitable at all times. With numberless porches upstairs and down, one can always find solitude if one wishes, or discover some congenial soul to talk or be silent with.

In the South, when a person plans a home, he first builds a porch, and then if he has any money left, he adds few or more rooms according to his needs, but the porch is the essential thing. One college professor that I know, who had only a limited sum with which to build a home, insisted that he must have at least a bathroom in addition to his veranda, all other quarters being, if necessary, dispensable. But the rise in contractors' prices, with no corresponding elevation of professorial salaries, had reduced him to the necessity of relinquishing either the one or the other. Since he could not have a bathroom and a

porch, he said he would put his bathtub on his porch. Even so, he would have a home, for while in New York every man's house is his prison, in the South every man's porch is his home.

The public porch is an ancient thing, but the private affair as part of the dwelling-house, is modern. The earliest porticoes are said by the encyclopedia to be the two at the Tavern of the Winds at Athens, and there would seem to have been some at the entrance to Diomedes' villa outside the Pompeiian gate, though in Rome (so my reference friend asserts) they were probably not allowed. No wonder Rome fell! We know that the glory of Greek culture was due to the fact that teaching was done by means of affable conversation on porches, as students and philosopher strolled up and down. How much less onerous would learning be to-day if our colleges pursued such plans! There were porches attached to the early churches, which explains why people went to church oftener then than now.

But curiously enough, the public porch has disappeared, and the home-porch risen among us. It remained for the moderns to construct verandas to houses where people live, since it is only the moderns who know how to live comfortably and agreeably.

It has been said that in the old days piazzas had not been invented because people had no leisure, but that we of to-day are wealthy and inventive enough to spend our time in happy loafing. Ancient and medieval life lacked many of the fine points of knowing how to live, and piazzas were among their greatest deprivations. I am joyful that I was not born in a porchless age. It is pleasing, also, to remember that the household porch as we have it now, is an American invention, a distinctively American institution, a product of our hospitality and our craving for the unrestricted outlook, the far gaze upon life.

What bliss to live in the open, with a floor to protect one from the damp and the dust, and a roof to ward off obtrusive rain and sun! Walls are nonessential, pure encumbrances to real living, the outgrowth of effete civilization. A porch is more than a mere extension of a house in wood or stone or brick. It is an expansion of the soul in terms of beauty and light and breadth of view. How different is the life lived on the porch from that suffered in a connecting series of little dark closets in the city, where the rooms are so small that they are but the outer shell of the tenant, who feels undressed when he steps out

into the street! Man was made for the wide spaces of field and sky, not for prisoning cells. Inside four walls man's powers are contracted, but on a porch with outlook to the sun, the stars, the wide open, they are expanded infinitely.

The porch soul is the foundation for the highest type of character,—the wideness of spiritual vision, the joy in living, the generosity of nature found in people who live on porches and lacking in natures restricted to mere houses. Were not the hanging gardens of Babylonia one form of porches, giving beauty and joy to those creating them? And were not the great Biblical characters in the habit of spending their time on open roofs equivalent to our upstairs verandas? Think how the porch balcony in Italy has romanticized literature and life! Consider the apartment houses in Paris which are so constructed that each tenant may have his little veranda,—and the French custom of dining on the sidewalk is but an extension of the porch ideas. Those countries have the porch soul. The Spanish patio and the English walled garden have the requisite uplook, of course, but they lack the broad view which a real piazza gives.

But compare with these genial nations the

Turks, for instance, where life is walled-in altogether, and where no woman may rock on her own porch in the open and enjoy free air and society. The haremlik is an emblem of the porchless soul. And have the Germans porches? No! The imperial palaces in which the Kaiser lived his autocratic life were porchless, so that he had no means of sensing the actual life outside. The real cause of the great war is the absence of porches in Germany. One cannot have the proper inlook unless he has an outlook, since a vista is necessary for the true formation of character. Beware the man who never has a far gaze! A porch gives a look of repose and serenity to a house because it indicates the porch soul.

Fancy a porch in the early morning, when the flowers have fresh-washed faces, when the dust is laid by the dew, when the happy stir of life goes on all about. I can see so much from my porch here in the country, which is yet near enough to the city to witness all sorts of people pass. Sprawly puppies are worrying each other on the newly cut grass, darkeys are singing in the near-by fields as they hoe corn, two jaybirds are quarreling on the gravel walk, uttering profane synonyms at each other, and a hen wanders across a flower-

bed, calling her offspring with stern cluckings, in response to which the brood breaks after her, scrambling and chirping like an agitated omelet. I can see a black woman going by on the road, a basket of clothes balanced on her head,—swaying but never in danger of falling. Groups of laughing, gay young negroes pass by to their work or to errands in town. Little boys, as black as the berries they have in their buckets for sale, are on their way to market. An old mule ambles restfully down the road, drawing a cart that creaks with rheumatism and years, and that has one hind wheel at an alarming angle with the body of the cart. But the driver, an ebony antique, is unagitated, and the animal at ease of mind. Not for any inducement would that mule quicken his pace. Autos from the city whirl by with sophisticated snorts and honk-honks, raising resentful dust in whorls.

In case I wish to write, I can do so lounging luxuriously in a swinging couch, with a pair of wrens in the nest under the eaves above me giving me warbly assistance, and with a foxhound puppy licking my idle hand. A chipmunk creeps out and runs along the low stone wall near by, at the crest of the hill, and sits watching me to see if I

mean well. A mocking bird that has a nest in the Cherokee rose-vine near by the tulip poplar tree, is singing divinely, pouring out liquid light and dancing melody and dreams set to music that may never be imitated. I pause with my pencil dropping from my hand, for how can one but listen to that joyous bird? I think I'd choose to be a mocking bird in my next incarnation rather than anything else, because I've always so longed to sing and have not been able to in this life.

On the other side of the porch are opportunities for study of human nature. The young people of the household bring their friends there. Lucia is usually there with one or more of her visitors, and in the afternoons and evenings there are likely to be various callers. Lucia is a distant cousin of the household, who has come up from Alabama to pay a visit, a summer-long visit, of the sort girls pay in the South,—yet which we feel will be all too-short in this case. Lucia is the kind of girl for whom everybody likes to do things,—particularly troused everybody—and does them in one's best way, feeling, moreover, that one's best is not good enough for her.

Lucia has had many admirers since she came. Many call but none are chosen, it appears, though

two in particular, the Doctor and the Professor, have a persistence worthy of a better cause, Lucia says, that would doubtless mean success in any undertaking not dependent upon feminine emotion. Porch courtships are entertaining to the observer, but I have other things enspiriting to watch, so that I give only half an eye and ear to the other end of the porch, and with the other fractions realize the wonders about me.

There is so much to see that I wish for a hundred eyes. The friendly road with all its travelers attracts me, for it is a restful thing to watch other people going about their busy affairs, while I loaf in the shade. The birds think these tall trees, this woody lawn, their sanctuary, for they fly and sing at will, minding me no more than if I were one of them. If I notice carefully I can see the roses open in the sun, and fancy what their thoughts must be about this gay green world. The yellow lilies nod wisely to each other, day-dreaming perhaps of the dark forest from which they were brought to bloom in this garden. Perhaps they once blossomed for Indian maids long ago. The white butterflies float in the sun, now singly, now in groups, now lighting on the blossoms of the clover that sends its pink perfume into the warm air.

Then there is the back porch, a wonder-place in which to sit in the cool mornings. Sprangly oaks and upright poplars shade it, and the grass grows greenly to the very doorsteps. Here Mose, the colored gardener, he of the excessive pigmentation and the white-toothed smile, brings baskets of vegetables and fruits, which, if I am so minded, I may help prepare for canning. Work on a porch is never like real work, because one's tools drop constantly from one's lazy hands, the while one watches a squirrel frisk by, or gives sympathetic heed to the efforts of a wren to teach her babes to fly.

I can look out over the cornfields and see the negroes working, and watch the corn grow in the sunshine,—growing in fact or seeming, as fast as the darkeys work,—though that is not excessive rate of speed. This back porch is used as a delightful place in which to eat watermelons, when they are ripe in Virginia. Mose also brings me early plums, a lovely red, and strawberries delectable enough for disembodied spirits to enjoy, and raspberries, red and black. The blackberries, too, are ripening, and the huckleberries, as the lips of small boys unconsciously tell me. Mose brings me baskets of big strawberries, and smiles as he

says: "Mistis, dey's good enough to make you swallow your tongue!" Everything tastes better on the porch than inside the house, for there is some magic about the cordial air, the quickening sun, that makes eating a mild rapture.

If I tire of the back porch, I may go to the kitchen porch, looking out over the tennis court, where the quavering foxhound puppies play, uttering blithe doggerel. The pine trees come up lovingly to the house, and I can see in the back the little stream that burbles to itself in sun-flecked shadows. Far back can be heard the pigpen, from which come grunts of lazy content, to match my own sensations, and occasional distressed squeals that cut the air when some intrusive pig tramples on his brother's toes. Sometimes I sit here and churn, having in a large-hearted impulse offered to help the dark lady with her work. Churning is a dreamful occupation, for one does not need to work fast. I can pretend to read as I splash-splash-splash, but it is only a pretense, for the gurgles in the churn, the foaming bubbles that come out at the top, the runlets that spill over the edge and trickle down upon the newspaper spread preparedly upon the floor, are more entrancing than black letters on white

paper. It is an exciting moment when the first little speckles of butter appear on the top, and I know that the butter is coming. I drop a lump of ice inside the churn to make the butter firmer and to help it "gather." When the work is over and the butter taken up, I sit on the kitchen porch and drink deeply of the fresh buttermilk. There's no nectar like it!

There is also the side porch, whence one has the best view of the road, and can vicariously go on all sorts of journeys without tiring, stroll through the little woodsy paths with the eye, watch the diffident boldness of the young rabbits in the brush, count the cows that saunter out to pasture, flash by in motors or go on barefooted ease through the soft dust. No highway in the world is more entrancing than that road, because of its naïve unconsciousness of interest, its indifference to observing eye.

There is likewise the back porch upstairs, where I sit in the sun to dry my hair after a shampoo. Close up beside the wall is a rose vine, in which a song-sparrow has its nest. The little birds, so slight, so small, so frail, chirp and twitter unafraid, though I sit close enough to touch them with my outstretched hand.

With my hair streaming behind me in the sun, the light bringing out unguessed gold in it, the wind playing through it, I feel more alive, more elementally natural, than when these locks are pinned upon my head in conventional array. One's hair has distinct personality of its own, and tyrannizes over one according as it is repressed or liberated. Who could think of Bacchantes with marcelled waves, or nuns with streaming locks? Could a woman fresh from the hands of a fashionable hairdresser be absolutely unaffected and natural? Could any woman face a situation with poise and dignity if she knew her hair was raveling at the back of her neck and stringing down over her brow and ears in slovenly style? Invisible hairpins have lent a visible dignity in many a feminine crisis. As Samson was said to lose his strength when his hair was cut, so surely woman loses her femininity when her braids are shorn, —and one gathers vital force when one sits in the sun with loosened hair, letting the wind play at will through the free locks.

The morning porches are chiefly for solitude, the afternoon ones for society, though all sorts of persons drop in on us when we are on the porch. Formality is done away with, for who could be

conventional on a wide porch in the sweet air of summer? Acquaintances passing along the road see others sitting on the veranda and come in to find out who they are. Children wander about, romping over the steps and tumbling on the grass, their little bodies upturned like gay-colored, animated mushrooms, vocal with delight. Young girls flutter about like flower petals in their bright dresses, and delicate old ladies, still in black for husbands or lovers who fell in the Civil War, smile indulgently as they listen to their gay chatter. A soft-moving colored woman, with a bright bandana on her head, comes out, bringing lemonade in tall glasses that tinkle gently and tempt us with their green-minted coolness.

But perhaps the porch is nicer still in the evening, for then no one is working or thinking of work. We sit and rock softly, and talk flows on like a pleasant river. There is no light on the veranda, but the golden beams from the hall and the rooms come through the open door and windows, attracting the wavering moths to the paths of light. The moon is rising from among the pine trees beyond the lake, showing silver lines of radiance on the still water, and touching with unearthly beauty the spires of distant buildings.

Fireflies are everywhere, flitting and palpitant, while the glow from cigars tries to mimic them but cannot. Young girls are like spirits in their white dresses, and young men sitting on the steps play stringed instruments with twangly touch, and sing songs of love and longing in happy voices.

But sometimes I think the sleeping porch is the best of all. To lie in the open, yet knowing myself sheltered, to draw deep breaths of the tonic air, to hear the melodic murmur of the leaves so close to me,—for it is almost as if I were in the trees themselves, since their branches brush against the screen beside my pillow,—is a different thing from sleeping stupidly inside a room. I can lie awake in a delicious drowsiness, and watch the white stillness of the moonlight, with the lake at the foot of the hill shining silverly, and with my mocking bird singing poignantly somewhere in the distance. A little rowboat is on the lake, with two persons in it, slipping by soundless and quiet as if it were a wraith, as—who knows?—perhaps it is. I lie awake a long time, for the night is too rare to be wasted in mere slumber, and listen to the country noises, the baying of the hounds, the chirping of crickets, the far-off, eerie call of a screech owl, the booming of the bull-

frogs in the lake. There is an exquisite transition state between consciousness and slumber that I am never aware of in inside sleeping. I sleep at once more deeply and more consciously in the open than within stuffy houses. I am at once fast asleep, in health-giving slumber, and enjoying the sensations I feel. I sleep, realizing that I am asleep, and reveling in the experience. Surely the best cure for insomnia would be a sleeping-porch in the country!

The front porch where I spend most of my time is large enough for an enormous family to enjoy either solitude or society there as they might wish. It is, let us say, fifty feet long and fifteen wide. I have never had the inquisitive energy to measure it, but that is about what it looks to be. It stretches the width of a colonial house, with great white columns across the front. It faces to the south, looking out across flower-beds and a lawny hill to a lake at the foot of the slope, a little lake still when the wind is quiet, and dimpling when there is any breeze. All about are skyscrapers, tall pine trees that stand erect and front the heavens with august simplicity. A low stone coping that keeps the flower-beds at the crest of

the hill from being washed away, now is covered by a pink radiance of Dorothy Perkins roses. June and Dorothy Perkins roses!

I look out on a curving nook with pine trees on each side of it, and a stone wall behind, with a convent seat where lovers may sit and dream. A chipmunk, who has his chip-monastery in a hole underneath it, thinks it was put there for him. He resents anyone else's presence near it, and utters little barking squeaks of disapproval, quite as if lovers had no place in his universe at all. He whisks his ornate little tail over the Dorothy Perkins roses in odd disfavor. Chipmunks are such egoists!

Lucia takes her admirers to the convent seat with cool impartiality, seeming to care no more—and no less—for the brisk young black-haired, black-eyed doctor with his crisp efficiency of manner, than for the grave, reserved young scholar with his blue eyes looking out with restraint through his nose-glasses, and with the student stoop common among bookish men who have no women folk to admonish them daily to hold their shoulders up. The Doctor has lived here always, so is no novelty to us, but the Professor is from Boston, come here to do research work among old papers.

Under the roof of my porch are little bird-houses where the wrens may live and rear their families in peace. Wrens have so many enemies in this world of small boys, squirrels, cats, and other prowlers, that it takes human intervention to reduce the mortality among wrenlets and let the songs be perpetuated. There are tiny eggs in the house above me, this house with a door no bigger than a two-bit piece. No other birds, such as the intrusive English sparrow, can come in and drive the wrens away, so the mother bird sits dreaming on her eggs and sings in happy safety. Her mate brings her food, the two twittering joyously to each other about the future, and the June world they look out upon. Like me, they find it good.

A driveway curves round the house, then rambles off down the hill to the road a good distance away. It is quiet in the mornings, when usually only the tradesmen's carts come up, but in the afternoon autos snort up the slope, disturbing the wrens, and causing the squirrels to flirt their tails in annoyance. It is really a much nicer driveway in the morning!

It is morning. I do not know the hour, nor do I care. Here on this June porch in Virginia,

clocks have no thralldom over me, though otherwhiles I'm ruled by figures on a dial. Now I am free in a timeless world! I am alone, which is another joy not frequently experienced by me or by the other inhabitants of the island on which I live when I'm not here. An hour lengthens itself out so delectably when it doesn't have to be shared with anyone! Isn't it queer how persons who would not think of asking you to give them money or property, will calmly request of you your time,—which no money can replace? A day, an hour, what is it but a little piece of your life?—yet those who would not ask for pounds of your flesh will cheerfully demand your time.

The porch has been set in order, and I am loafing in happy abandon. At my end of the veranda is a swinging couch, in which I vibrate at peace with the world, as a part of the wheeling planets, with a motion as inspired as theirs. I *am* a planet,—why not, if I choose?—with a free yet ordered cosmic motion, swaying as I list. Out here in the open world I am all things of nature. I am that humming-bird, shaking the world with my whirling wings; I am that puppy leaping with winy life; I am that darkey in the battered hat riding down the road; I am that pig grunting in sensuous

peace in the pen by the stable, more than half in love with easeful life; I am that slanting sun-beam down which the gold motes dance. Out here life is so abounding, so spontaneous, that one body cannot hold all of its vitality. I am alive as never before, yet steeped in a heavenly laziness.

Within reach of my indolent hand is a table littered with books and magazines, which I do not touch. This morning is too perfect to be wasted in reading. One can read elsewhere and elsewhen. Reading is for the aged and the infirm, and for city folk, who die soon after they are born. But I am a porcher now, and I have naught to do with books this morning! Propped up by pillows and swaying slowly in the wind, I gaze about me. The empty chairs look comradely, the little green rockers with their stiff backs covered by white nightshirts, the steamer chair, the French lounging couch, the big capacious rockers and straight chairs, the footstools, and all manner of temptations to laziness. Who could be anything but self-indulgent on a Southern porch? This is my morning haunt, for the sun cannot reach me here, and the telephone is too far away to torment me. If I hear it at all, it is

as some far-off music for which I feel no responsibility of answer.

The other end of the porch is the gathering place in the afternoon, with furniture a shade more formal, less indolent in appeal. There the tea-table is set and the tea-wagon comes trundling out when callers arrive after we have had our nap and waked to a new world. The afternoon end of the porch must always be orderly, which is why I like it less at times. I may not sprawl about in a swinging couch or lounge in a steamer chair, but must sit up in afternoon clothes and entertain guests. The magazines must be cleared away, lest I be tempted to read while I have company. I am often struck with a perverse impulse to read when callers are here, though I may have loafed away a whole illiterate morning. But that, of course, depends upon the nature of the callers.

There is a big hanging vase of Chinese blue, heavenly blue, upon the wall beside the door, with Wandering Jew growing in it, whose trailing vines stray over the white wall. There are flower-boxes of Spanish tiling to match the vase and the sky, as well as the rose of the flowers that grow in the boxes and the blue of the rugs.

The dogs of the household are not allowed to come upon this porch in the afternoon, for they are clumsy, muddy creatures whose affectionate impulses menace balancing cups and dainty frocks. They come to the steps and look longingly at the tea-wagon with its sandwiches and little cakes,—the foxhounds with their deep humility of aspect and their obtrusive obstinacy of manner, the bulldog with his face like a gargoyle, the fox-terrier with his thumping tail and eager eyes, the Scotch collie with her lovely coat and honest, importunate air of devotion. They sit or move mournfully about in their banishment, contriving to make our guests think we are hard-hearted or considerate, according as they like or dislike dogs. Still, one may care for dogs and yet have a concern for one's raiment, in these days of laundry complications, for an affectionate paw laid on one's knee sends a white skirt to the wash at once, and a nuzzling nose leaves streaks that call for a cleaner's best efforts. Dogs are dear, yes, but it is better to fondle them only in one's old clothes in the morning.

I have wished that poor city dogs, pathetic creatures ignominiously muzzled, never at liberty, looking out in mute protest from high-barred windows, slinking along dragged by chains, on

adamant pavements, leaning blasé heads from passing autos, could be turned loose on country porches—in the morning, of course. It would not do, naturally, to set them all free on contiguous verandas, but a few in a place could get along amicably and be much happier than they are now.

It is only on some magic porch or other that the lost art of loafing can be recaptured. What if that were permanently lost to the world? How terrible to contemplate? On a porch one relapses into gentility,—one realizes that it is ill-bred to be so busy that one forgets or neglects the sweet courtesies of life, that it is vulgar to be always in a hurry. It is vulgar because it is self-centered. The Arabs, wise souls!—have an adage that leisure is God-given but haste is of the Evil One. The Arabs, doubtless, have little earthen porches in front of their tents in the desert, whence comes their sane philosophy.

It is only on porches that one learns the sweet grace of procrastination, practicing to the limit the high art of putting off till to-morrow, some beautiful, perfect *mañana*, any to-morrow, the task too tedious to be done to-day. There be narrow-minded, house-souled folk who count such pro-

crastination a weakness, even vice, but that is because of the limitation of their outlook. Procrastination is, in truth, a virtue, admirable, acquirable by anyone who wills. How much more impressive to *be* than merely nervously to *do!* Of course, there is the cheap, spurious procrastinator, he who is new to the thought, who hasn't yet realized that postponement is a time-saver, not the thief it has been libelously called. He, masquerading time-server, doesn't really procrastinate, or at least, he does so with his overt, vicious energy that is the enemy to easeful art. He performs any number of distasteful tasks to reconcile his conscience to the putting off of one thing he thinks he should do. He will do with ludicrous alacrity anything to avoid the one thing he dislikes. But he is a mere pretender, since he sets in motion vibrations of bourgeois energy inimical to gracious ease.

The real procrastinator, the one with ancestry of loafing behind him, puts sour-visaged duty in her place, with a smile so charming that she is content to be ignored. He has more important projects on hand than mere physical or mental chores. He must ponder on the outer loveliness of nature, must hear the silences of sound, must watch

the stillnesses of motion, must psychoanalyze the insects. How can he do these essential things if he has to be pottering about unnecessary trivialities? Life is so cluttered up with useless tasks! Souls need spring house-cleanings to rid themselves of objectionable encumbering prejudices toward exertion.

Promptness is the thief of time. Most duties have no real cause to be performed, anyhow, and he who rushes up to do them frenziedly, finds out later that he has fashed himself for nothing. Procrastination, on the other hand, promotes all the gentilities of life that are rudely jostled out of the way by the energetic, prompt person. The cocksure person who is always ahead of time is unendurable to live with. It is on a porch that one learns the true value of time. I found a charming sentence lately in a theme written by a student who is a foreigner. He said: "I think it is abhorrible to spend your money squanderously in riotous living." I think it dreadful to spend time squanderously in mere work, when magic hours were meant for loafing on a porch.

On a porch the friction of motion and of emotion are cooled, and a stilling hand is laid on the fevered pulse of life. Here one has time to think.

It is difficult to think inside suspicious walls, deafened by clamorous noises, jarred by unceasing vibrations. Thinking is an operation that requires the open air, the caressing wind, the high blue heavens to aid, the friendly trees. One cannot meditate amidst the monstrous noises of the city, but here on a country porch, the sounds one hears are stillnesses, benedictions. Caught up in tyrannic buildings halfway between earth and sky yet near to neither, fretted by unnatural sounds and motions, poor city beings never can muse,—they can only be amused. The cure for nervous prostration and moral perversion is a secluded porch in the country.

The conversation that human beings carry on would be sincerer, gentler, kindlier, if it were uttered on open porches with the peace of pine trees and whispering waters and candid sky about. One would not so readily yield to sarcastic impulses in the presence of benignant trees, nor utter light flatteries, nor criticize in the presence of flowers, nor quarrel with song sparrows to hear, I fancy. It is possible for us to be our best selves, our real selves, only in the open. I think that we can be wholly natural only in the immediate presence of nature.

The porch is an ideal place, for it is essentially a part of the home, yet a part of the outdoors as well. One's personality expands with the far outlook. The hermit who lives in the woods is not so utterly cut off from his fellows as is the cliff-dweller in the city, who lives too near to man to know him or to be known. The ideal place for living is the porch, where one may see his fellow-mortals in reason, yet be much alone. To be in the home, yet in the open, to be close to all the pulsing life of man and of nature, and yet to be alone at will,—that is the blessedness of the porch-life.

In the city one is so far away from nature that one knows when it is spring only by the thermometer and the florists' windows. The sun is a remote stranger, briefly glimpsed in narrow expanse of sky at the top of tall buildings, and the moon is practically unknown, for how should she shine in competition with garish, winking signs? The stars are obscured by smoke, and are not the friends we know by name in the country. The wind is at atmospheric condition, not a comrade, as on country piazzas. Here, now, as I sit dreaming, the breeze has personality.

O little wistful wind
 That steals so stilly by,
 So hesitantly kind,
 So delicately shy!—

You lightly lift my hair,
 So softly touch my cheek,
 Almost as if you were
 Endeavoring to speak.

Some secret word, or show
 The ghost of a caress,—
 But would I answer,—lo!
 You're fled to nothingness!

I am a Virginian, not by nativation, but by visitation, a summer Virginian, and this series of porches where I spend my joyous vacations are not really mine, you know. They are porches-in-law, but I'm not disturbed over the fact, since I always did think Dante was illogical in being upset over having to go up and down other people's stairs all his life. Loafing on other people's porches is a sight easier than keeping one's own furnished and in order. Other folks' gardens have somewhat the same satisfaction as others' children, cars, and so forth. There's no responsibility about clothing, gasoline, discipline, or digging, but one can just sit back and enjoy them.

But I find this difference between porches-in-law and gardens-in-law. Owners of gardens seem more foolishly fond of them than of their porches, curiously enough. Householders will permit an outsider to criticize their porches, where amateur gardeners refuse suggestion of improvement. It seems that gardens are more like children than porches are. Owners wish no slightest hint of even constructive criticism, no comment that that rose would perhaps look better yonder, or that the pedestal to the gazing-globe is a shade too ornate, or anything of the kind. Women are as sensitive about their gardens as about their children, willing to berate them themselves on occasion, but suffering no adverse remark from any howsoever close relation. I sometimes think that mothers are the foolishest creatures in the world, for they are so avid of praise for their offspring, yet so hermetically sealed against suggestion that their progeny are not perfect. Yet any given mother will freely criticize other children, will comment on them at will, and even grant an unmarried woman the right to an opinion concerning them, while thinking it a mark of criminal insanity for anyone to hint at defect in *her* children.

A mother seems to think that the mere physical fact of parturition endows her with supernatural wisdom, while on the contrary, it takes from her the judgment and common sense she may originally have had with reference to children. I believe the world would be vastly better off if children were separated from their mothers at birth and given to other women to be cared for. But since society is not yet sufficiently advanced to permit of such a scheme, the only other plan of wisdom for children is to bring them all up on verandas.

In the city where I live, I have a little square of roof that is my own, and which I fondly call my porch, gloating over less favored mortals who must huddle on stoops or hang over fire-escapes to get a breath of air. But it does not serve the purposes of a real porch,—it is only a pathetic substitute. When I retire there hopefully to think, my neighbors' maids shake angry dust-cloths over me, my neighbors' husbands raucously discuss the monthly bills, my neighbors' victrolas try to outsound the hurdy-gurdy in the street beyond, while my neighbors' babies cry incessantly. Babies in the city have so much more to cry over than those in the country! There are

birds about my porch, yes,—a swearing parrot in a flat across the alley, a caged canary on the floor below, that sings vociferously,—the same that wakes me every morning at six o'clock—and an occasional rusty English sparrow that perches on my iron railing and chirps complaints to the clothes-line. No, a roof is not a porch! In the city, one never escapes oneself and never finds oneself, never gets away from other people and never gets close to them. One's egos are like horrible Siamese twins, not separable, not free, as in the open.

I think that the many mansions spoken of as making heaven home-like, will be furnished with numerous and wide porches. I am trying to be very good so that I may sometime go there, but if I find paradise porchless, I shall request the angels to let me come back to certain porches that I know on earth

II

ENTOMOLOGY ON A COUNTRY PORCH

WHILE I lazily lie in my swinging couch on my country porch and watch the insects in their varied life about me, I mourn over the wasted years in which I did not study entomology. I should get so much more out of all this, if I were less ignorant concerning the biology and psychology of bugs,—but even so I enjoy watching them in my illiterate way. Possibly after all, the amateur scientist is the only one who truly takes pleasure in studying nature, for the professional must regard it as work, and must classify and record his observations for the suspicious eyes of brother scientists, while the amateur, as the name implies, is one who loves it and looks upon it as a joy and not a task.

I am regretful that in my growing up years bugs were not regarded seriously as now. I have to get my mind adjusted to the notion of taking them as important members of society, since in my green

days they were brushed aside or stepped on without qualm. I didn't know then that scholars give their whole lives to studying worms, or work up a passionate fervor over spiders, or rhapsodize over bees. Childhood felt a sympathetic disregard for these creatures, which adulthood scorned. I always agreed with the poet who said:

"I would not number in my list of friends,
Though blessed with polished learning and fine sense
Yet lacking sensibility, the man
Who'd needlessly set foot upon a worm."

I thought that bugs had as much right to a place in the shade as I did, and that we humans should have a care for their happiness, but I knew nothing of their real activities, their tyranny over our destiny. Hasn't modern civilized life come to be little else than a fight for life against bugs? Even the thought of them is terrifying, as in the case of the darkey I heard of lately who went crazy because he fancied he had worms in his brain. That would be an awful condition of affairs. What if—? but let us dismiss the thought!

Insects are attractive things and very human, or perhaps we men and women are like bugs. I have known dragon flies, swift-motioned, gleam-

ing; and hornets, unbeautiful but effective; some people are like honeybees, engaged in sweet unselfish labors, while others are crickets that only chirp; some are butterflies, flashing in the pure light, while others are noisome, creeping things that lurk in dank shadows. Some persons are fireflies, lighting up dark places for others, while there are those who are house flies, inquisitive, annoying, noxious. There are some who remind me of the darkey folk-rhyme which says:

“De June-bug hab de golden wing,
De lightnin’ bug de flame;
De bed-bug got no wing at all,
But he git dar jes’ de same!”

Yet there isn’t anybody who isn’t interesting, and so there is no bug that doesn’t repay you for studying it. I wonder what insect I am like?—my family would doubtless say a mosquito.

As I lie here quietly, the insects think I am a harmless piece of porch furniture and go about their activities without fear. They do not loaf as I do. While I daily kill portions of eternity by studying them, they waste no moments in watching me. That dirt-dauber, with his black and yellow convict stripes, is building a house for himself

at the top of the front door. He should know that it will not be permitted to remain, for the maid has knocked it down already various times, but he seems to have an illogical mind. All insects are like that, where human intervention comes in. His house is a cunningly contrived adobe hut, with little passages inside, where he and his family might live in peace but for the catapulting broom which has a hundred eyes. He thought he had chosen a safe as well as sightly place, but when the broom attacks, his house falls to the ground, its little secret ways laid bare, a crumbled ruin. The dirt-dauber looks like the wasp and the hornet, but he is a harmless soul that cannot sting, so he has no protection against artilleried broom-straws. Now if insects were more intelligent, they'd have a league whereby the wasp and the hornet would rush to defend the dirt-dauber, and save him from despair.

There is a granddaddy longlegs stalking about on the floor, with his stilt-like dignity. However can he contrive to walk on such basting-threads? I never saw a living thing with such invisible means of support,—and there's really nothing to him but a couple of eyes, when you look closely at him.

Spiders are not allowed on this well-broomed porch, but they can construct their webs in the vines a little out of sight and stretch their gossamer threads across the flowers. The spiders with their pot-bellied bodies and beady eyes, are not beauteous objects, but a spider-web in the sunshine with dew upon it, is one of the loveliest things in the world. The colored maid, Tish—her name is really Letitia Elizabeth Sara Katherine Jane Roxy Anna Cora Tippet Morgan, but we call her Tish for short—is careful to brush down the webs when she spies them, but she will never harm the spinner. I once asked her why, and she answered, “Hit’s bad luck.”

“Naturally, it’s bad luck for the spider,” I answered. But she responded with dignity:

“If you wish to live an’ thrive,
Let all spiders run alive.”

I note in general a closer harmony between insects and the colored race than the white. Negroes do not willingly destroy any living thing, but courteously permit it to live, even if it has been convicted of maleficence. Darkeys dote on germs, while a too thoroughly hygienic, antiseptic world would kill off the colored race in a month.

Someone showed me an extraordinary spider-web the other day. A man in Munich raises a certain breed of spiders that spin threads of astonishing strength, which he weaves into cloth as delicate as dream, yet substantial enough to allow pictures to be painted upon it. This spider-cloth I saw had on it the portrait of a laughing mountaineer in gala attire, with his hat on one side and his pipe in his mouth. How his sweetheart must have admired him! The picture was framed with glass both front and back, so that one might see the fragility of the texture,—and there that mountaineer may laugh for a century or so. I wonder why the enterprising Bavarian doesn't weave cloth for wedding-dresses out of his spider threads.

There are trench spiders as well as aviators, I have observed. The other day I descended from my couch to investigate a big hole in a flower-bed beside the porch. Pokings with a sharp stick educed no information, so I turned the hose on the hole, and jumped briskly to one side as presently a tarantula came scuttling up from its underground home through the drenching water. I watched it as it scrambled away in retreat, but at a distance, fearful of possible tar-

antism. I should think, however, that tarantulas would have the effect of making the observer run, instead of dance.

While it is difficult to determine an excuse for existence on the part of some insects, there are others that are obviously pleasure bugs. June-bugs, for instance, are most attractive insects. It is apparently one of the inalienable delights of childhood round about here to swing them by strings, to watch them in their colorful gyrations. I urge objection to the practice, since I'm sure the oscillation can't be pleasurable to the "Juney-bugs," but it's no use, for these innocent beings, like "lightning-bugs," are too lovely for their own good.

Bees, now, have some means of protecting themselves. I'd like to see any small boy swinging a bumble-bee by a string! Even the honeybee has a dignity of defense that guarantees its safety. There are several beehives here, located down on the hill toward the south, on the slope so that they may be protected from the north wind, and near to the lake, since bees love the water, and close to the banks of goldenrod and clover growing by the road. I lie in ease and watch the bees at work among the flowers,—a pleasant enough job, if a bee feels he simply *must* be busy.

At ordinary times the bees are inconspicuous, for they are a-wing among the flowers, scattered abroad. Sometimes they come upon the porch, if there's a jar of goldenrod here, but usually I have to view them at a little distance, as they go about their perfumed tasks. But sometimes they gather in a thick cloud over the hive, and are liable to swarm and go away in high dudgeon. Then apparently the disagreement is adjusted, the threatened strike averted, and the fly-out postponed till another day. They buzz about sullenly for an hour or so, and then go about their chores as individuals. Various things are likely to upset a temperamental swarm of bees, and as they have a Bolshevik spirit of uprising, combined with a Hunnish effectiveness of attack, one views their movements with concern.

Honey has more poetry about it than any other form of food, it seems to me. The honey is the gathered sunlight, the candied perfume of flowers, the scent of new-cut grass, the essence of spring breezes, the heart of summer days, so that one may eat all the summer and autumn in concentrated sweetness beside the winter fire, in a dreamful transsubstantiation of delight. And how kind of the bee not to preserve his sting in the honey!

Bees are a constant reproach to me in my idleness, causing me a certain uneasiness lest their attitude toward drones become personal. Yet I should love to be friends with them—not too close friends, however. I always have thought the superstition about telling the bees of any death in the household a beautiful idea, but I shouldn't confine the friendly gossip to such doleful announcement. Why not give the hive a daily bulletin of happenings that concern the family? Of course, such obvious facts as that the cow has a new calf, and that there's a little colt out in the pasture, with wobbly legs and a star on its forehead, they can see for themselves. But there are other incidents they cannot ascertain, and that would doubtless interest them. Why not announce betrothals and weddings and new babies as well as deaths? The bees would collect honey for us with greater zeal if we chatted cordially with them at times. I think that all living things appreciate comradely conversation. It is well-known, for instance, that a cow will give down her milk more readily if you speak her kindly, and will withhold it if you frighten or anger her. Chickens will flutter admiringly about you while you talk to them, especially if you feed them while

you chat. A dog will thump his tail enthusiastically if you tell him anything exciting about rabbits, for instance, or rats in a hole, and a horse will rub your arm affectionately if you pay him sugared compliments.

I try to get up conversation with the big black beetles and those of iridescent green that occasionally walk across the porch with attitudinizing mien. They stalk so haughtily when they think they are alone, and scuttle away in undignified retreat when I accost them, that it is discouraging. They are curiously human in their posing and self-consciousness; so much so, in fact, that I identify them with certain persons that I know, in the same fashion in which I name the chickens, the pigs, the squirrels, and all the beasts and birds about the place for human beings with whom I am acquainted. It gives a new interest to the men and women. When I see a certain vainglorious young minor poet, for instance, I see *through* him a young rooster perched upon a stone wall, announcing his importance to the unimpressed world. A speckled hen with a brood over which she sputters and clucks more than is needful, is to me a woman with a large family who used to entertain me by the way in which she settled and

unsettled her family in our church long ago. She made many a sermon endurable for me. That apologetic hound is a charwoman that worked in a London boarding-house, mournfully mopping stairs and slinking in corners as the landlady passed with accusing eye. And so on.

Occasionally a dragon fly comes up from the lake, its wings flashing in the sun, then is off on a swift errand of light, to be seen no more. I wonder what its part is in the scheme of existence, and if its life is wholly satisfactory to it. But then, I daresay insects are rarely pessimists, because they don't live long enough. It is only the human young that are cynical, and they recover quickly, as if their pangs were growing pains, or cosmic colic.

The moths that come up in the evening when the light streams through the open door upon the porch, are like ghosts. All sorts of winged things come to the light, big moths with bright-hued wings, little silver frailties too delicate for the touch of a finger, long-legged devil's horses, and angular creatures with the awkwardness and the adventurousness of adolescence. Last night I watched a little silver wraith, a tremulous, hesitant weakling, flying through the gray dusk in uncertainty, that lighted for an instant on my sleeve,

as if to take sanctuary from its unsleeping enemies. It fluttered and palpitated there for a moment, then was off to light upon the screen in an endeavor to reach the lamp within. The silent, intangible thing clung there for a second or two, then wandered off with a baby breeze that beckoned it. I wished that I might have followed it, to protect it from harm, but there is so little that one can do for ghosts!

When I have nothing more exciting to do, I lean over the edge of the porch and study the movements in an ant bed in the walk near the house. I can sympathize with the man in Theodore Dreiser's story, who dreamed that he was an ant, and woke up rather regretful to find that he was only a man. I have great respect for ants, for their executive ability, their industry in foraging, and their enterprise in colonizations are impressive. When an ant settlement raises the red flag, I hastily move in some other direction.

I never see an ant bed that I don't think of an incident that happened when I was in Oxford. A young city man had gone out to spend an afternoon in the country, enjoying the spring air. He walked around for some time, then sat down by

the roadside to rest awhile, till a glance at his watch reminded him that he must hurry if he would catch his train. He rushed to the station and swung into a section that happened to be empty.

After the train had started and the guard had made his rounds, the young man began to experience uncomfortable sensations, and found, to his horror, that his new spring trousers were covered with large ants. He had unwittingly sat upon an ant bed by the road, and some of the citizens had taken that opportunity for foreign travel. He tried to pick them off, but was locally convinced that there were too many of them for individual treatment. So in despair, he locked the door to his compartment, removed his trousers and leaned out of the window to shake off the ants. But in his agitation he shook a trifle too hard, for the wind whipped his garments out of his hand and sent them careering down the backward track.

Cold with horror lest a lady might wish to enter his compartment at the next station, he stood at the window, making grimaces like a madman, when the train stopped. All who came near him turned away in alarm, so he kept his section to himself. But soon he would be at his own station,

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and how could he go out? Presently the guard came along to investigate the case of madness some woman had reported, and the man asked him hysterically: "Will you sell me your trousers?"

"Not when I have only one pair," was the answer.

"Will you for heaven's sake telegraph to the next station to have a pair there for me when I get in? I'll pay any price!"

The guard agreed to do that, but the train arrived almost as promptly as the message, so there had been no time to send to a shop. The desperate untrousered man looked out of his window to see a grinning official coming with a pair of paint-stained overalls hanging upon his arm. Some workman had been prompted by providence to leave them at the station.

The unhappy man donned these and descended from the train, shivering under the gaze of the crowd, clad in natty gray coat and vest, with painty overalls to complete his costume. He reflected wretchedly upon how much of human happiness depends upon trousers, ungraceful garments as they are. But he walks no more in country lanes!

One of my chief joys in porch life is studying the

butterflies. There are numbers of them about every day, of lovely pastel shades, with their wings like painted silken paper, some golden like sunbeams that have suddenly taken wing, some brown like the dead leaves that flutter past them, some yellow like vivified primroses, some like the tawny tiger-lilies blooming beside the wall, some white as the star jasmine on the trellis, some with the flaming hues of sunset, and some like the pale dawn. Idly afloat in the sunshine, they look like flower-petals from some enchanted garden, possessing motion and life, so that when they fall, instead of perishing, they take on a new, unearthly beauty that will not die. Or are they perchance the souls of flowers that faded yesterday, or the imperishable dreams we mortals cherish, too delicate to come true, but too lovely to be destroyed? Butterflies have an unimaginable beauty, as if no future existed wherein the frost will fade the flowers, and the impermissible winds strip the leaves from the trees and silence the bird-songs in the forest, and fold these fragile wings forever. But is not beauty indestructible, and has not a thing that is perfect its own eternity of loveliness?

I saw a beautiful and friendly butterfly the other day when I was searching for four-leaf clovers in

the grass. It was a wonderful creature with wings of lavender blue on top, and gray on the under side, with darker shadings at the tips. It followed me closely for a distance, alighting on the hem of my dress, on my shoe, on my shoulder, and fluttering about my head as if in friendly greeting. A storm came up that night, and as I lay snugly under my cover, I thought with a pang of that butterfly out in the wind and the rain. It seems to me that there should be some arrangement of nature whereby such fragile, defenseless beings as butterflies might be protected from storms, but I don't know just how it could be managed. The next day I saw that butterfly or its double, as bright and flittery as ever. Or do butterflies really live but a day, and was this a new one? I wish I knew.

Recently I saw a little incident that seems unbelievable, but Lucia and the Professor were with me on the porch and saw it, too, so it must be true. Three butterflies were on the path in the sunlight in front of us, gorgeous black and yellow spotted beings, one with a broken wing. The injured one could scarcely fly, and from time to time would flutter to the ground, as if giving up, while the others circled over it. But pres-

ently as it was about to drop to the ground, the two supported it with their wings, and the three flew off together.

“*Could* that have been accident?” the Professor murmured in amazement, while Lucia insisted that butterflies have souls, and would certainly lend a wing to help each other in time of need.

There are no end of interesting insects that I see from my porch. I saw a snail out of his shell to-day taking an airing in the lily-bed just below me. His house was much smaller than he was, which fact impressed me by its contrast to our modern scheme of tenantry. We who own houses have them disproportionately large in comparison with ourselves, so that we are tied down to them and unable to go about to view the world as this carefree snail may do at will. Think how simple is his arrangement for furnishing,—he is his own furniture! He has no need for interior decorators, and no thought of moving-day can enslave his soul. As for raising the rent on his residence—it simply couldn’t be done!

There’s the caterpillar that walked beside me yesterday as I was picking sweet peas. He arched his way between the rows, coming perilously close to my feet, which he had no means of

knowing were harmless. Very brown and velvety, with fuzzy hair and lovely mottled markings on his back, with an inquisitive nose and little black head, he wormed his placid way along, apparently unconcerned by my proximity. Some insects have the apotheosis of dignity.

I watched Mose, the dark gardener, as he worked in the beds this morning, attempting to find the mole that has been ravaging the flowers. It was easy to see where the mole had been, by the little upheaved mound that followed his path, but Mose couldn't tell where Digger the Mole was then. As he spaded up the earth, he disturbed a colony of wonderful shiny beetles, green and bronze that shimmered in the sun like exquisite enamel. I watched them with envy of their gorgeous coloring, and thought how much more lovely they were than the earth-worms that wriggled behind the spade. I wonder if an earth-worm enjoys life. But you never can tell, of course. He doesn't have to answer the telephone, or write duty notes, or wash dishes, or count the laundry. He wriggles out of many annoying obligations, so perhaps he is fortunate after all. Let us hope he thinks so, at least.

While looking at the trees through my good

pair of field glasses the other day, I found a wasp nest in one of the trees not far away, but have made no journey toward it. I've always felt stand-offish toward wasps. I feel somewhat as the little boy in the Sunday school, who was told about the plagues of Egypt, that had no power to move stubborn Pharaoh's heart. When all had been described, the youngster squirmed excitedly, and cried out: "I bet if the Lord had thought of yellow jackets, old Pharaoh would 'a' come round!"

I also take an interest in bumblebees at a respectful distance. They buzz about among the flowers here, yellow-bodied, with black markings, noisy and pretentious, though they are less valuable in the social scheme than the honeybees that say little but collect honey for others. Recently I observed a bumblebee creep into a big hole in the bank near a pine tree, and I went to investigate. I had never seen a bumblebee at home before. I couldn't coax him out by friendly conversation, so I got my pocket flashlight, and turned on the illuminations, whereat the bumbler came out in rushing annoyance. I went hastily back to the porch.

One summer I slept out in the open, on an un-

screened porch, and it was then that I discovered that the bumblebee wakes up earlier than any other thing in creation. Before the birds have begun to chirp, or the most alert rooster to crow, the bumblebee would be going about his buzziness, droning like an airplane over my head. The Good Book tells us sluggards to consider the ant, but says nothing about the bumblebee who is the earliest riser in nature. An old man here recently amused us by a droning recitative about the "abominable bumblebee," the onomatopoeic effect of which was to imitate exactly the buzzing of the bee.

I've been interested in hearing the folk-songs about insects which the darkeys chant about here. For instance, Tish was singing this gem, while she washed off the steps the other morning.

" Oh, de bumberlybee am a pretty little thing;
De bumberlybee am round.
He gathers honey all de day
An' stows hit in de ground.

CHORUS

Reel, Dinah, po' gal!
Reel, Dinah, reel!
Reel, Dinah, po' gal!
Reel, Dinah, reel!

One day when I was walkin',
I walked across de fiel';
A bumberlybee crope outen his hole
An' stung me on de heel!

CHORUS

Reel, Dinah, po' gal!
Reel, Dinah, reel!
Reel, Dinah, po' gal!
Reel, Dinah, reel!"

As old Aunt Peggy came by the other day to bring me some huckleberries she had picked in the woods, she was singing an old song, a survival of slavery times, when the patrol was posted at night to catch the slaves who were out without permits from their masters. I've heard my mother sing it in my childhood, she having learned it from the slaves on her father's plantation.

"As I walked out to my corn-fiel',
A black snake stung me on de heel.
I jumped up an' run my best,
But I run right into a hornet's nest.

CHORUS

Oh, run, nigger, run, or de paterroller'll git you!
Run, nigger, run, an' try to git home!"

A ten-year-old ginger-cake darkey, one Thomas Jefferson Randolph Jones, was weeding the flower-bed a morning or so ago, to the tune of *The Grass-mo-whopper*, which ballad runs as follows:

“De grass-mo-whopper settin’ on de sweet potato vine,
De grass-mo-whopper settin’ on de sweet potato vine,
De grass-mo-whopper settin’ on de sweet potato vine,
Way down in Alabam!

Here come Mr. Turkey-Gobble-Wobble walkin’ up
behin’,
Here come Mr. Turkey-Gobble-Wobble walkin’ up
behin’,
Here come Mr. Turkey-Gobble-Wobble walkin’ up
behin’,
Way down in Alabam!

An’ he picked de grass-mo-whopper fum de sweet
potato vine,
An’ he picked de grass-mo-whopper fum de sweet
potato vine,
An’ he picked de grass-mo-whopper fum de sweet
potato vine,
Way down in Alabam!

Den he smacked his lips an’ say, ‘You sho is fine!’
Den he smacked his lips an’ say, ‘You sho is fine!’
Den he smacked his lips an say, ‘You sho is fine!’
Way down in Alabam!

An' I hopes to meet anodder one ob yo' kin',
An' I hopes to meet anodder one ob yo' kin',
An' I hopes to meet anodder one ob yo' kin',
Way down in Alabam!"

The colored folk-songs deal with homely creatures and incidents and situations, with no attempt at refinement, many of them being even less suitable for publication than one I heard Thomas Jefferson Randolph, sometimes called T. J. R. and sometimes Randy, for the saving of time, singing recently. It has for its theme the boll-weevil which is a menace to cotton in the south, and which has a sort of indestructibility discouraging to the farmer.

"I found a little weevil
An' put him on de ice.
I thought dat dat would kill him,
But he said: 'Oh, ain't dat nice!
Dis is my home,—Dis is my home!"

I found another little weevil
An' put him in de sand.
I thought dat dat would kill him,
But he stood it like a man.
'Dis is my home,—dis is my home!"

De farmer said to de merchant,
'Oh, what do you think of dat?"

I found a little weevil
In my new Stetson hat,—
Huntin' a home, huntin' a home!"

As Randy chased a microscopic frog across the lawn, he intoned:

"Way down yander on de bank-ter-wank,
Frogs kin jump fum bank to bank.
Lightnin' bugs an' hootin' owls
Are a-singin' songs ob my ol' gal.
An' de birds an' de winds so high
Am a-singin' ob day gal so shy,—
Dat she's so sweet,
When de moon do shine,—
Dat gal ob mine,
Dat gal ob mine!"

The colored people are much more songful than the whites. Music is in their souls, and bubbles forth on all occasions. The darkeys have a song for every object in nature, and for every incident of colored life, as impartial as the ancient Greeks in their personification of things of nature. Their voices are untrained, but have a wild, bardic beauty unknown to white culture, with a power to reach the heart.

One interesting feature of darkey folk-songs is their use of repetition, which saves the effort of

composing new lines, of course, a metrical economy which should commend itself to such rhymesters as sell verse by the line, and which makes for a certain monotony in singing. Then there is the practice of combining parts of one song with those of another, of using one chorus for several songs on occasion, and of changing in a way that is entertaining, yet confusing to the folklorist on the hunt for correct versions of any song.

I asked Aunt Mandy, our dusky cook, not long ago if she could tell me something of the folklore of the district,—a senseless question, as I should have known. She leaned apologetically on the rim of her dishpan, and said: “Nawm, honey, I ain’ know nothin’ ’bout folklore. I ain’ got no eddication, you know,—for I kain’ even read an’ write. I ain’ never been to school. You mout ask Malviny, though, ’case she’s got a teacher’s suttificate.”

On another occasion, when she was telling me how to cure a conjure, I thoughtlessly commented on its interest as folklore, when she said, with an indulgent laugh at my ignorance. “Laws, chile, dat ain’ folklore! Dat’s jes’ sayin’s dat I learned fum my gran’mammy, dat’s been handed down amongst de colored folks fo’ de Lawd knows how

long, jes' fum word of mouth, you know. My gran'mammy, she done learned hit fum her granny, what wuz an African slave. But ef you wan's to larn any songs, you might could see Glorina, dat's got a singin' machine in her house. Hit sings all sorts ob songs."

Then Aunt Mandy turned back to her dishpan, singing:

"Possum up de gum stump,
Coony up de holler,
Little gal at our house
Fat ez she kin waller!"

T. J. R. perched on the lowest step of the porch this morning, to rest half an hour after having worked for fifteen minutes with a little group of willful weeds, and I heard him singing, as he swayed his body to and fro in rhythmic motion with the music.

"De ol' bee makes de honeycomb,
De young bee makes de honey.
De nigger makes de cotton an' corn,
An' de white man makes de money.

De raccoon carries de bushy tail;
De possum don't care 'bout no hair.
Mister Rabbit, he come skippin' by,
An' he ain't got none to spare.

Monday mornin', break ob day,
De white folks got me gwine,
But Saturday night when de sun goes down,
Day yaller gal's on my min'.

Saturday night an' Sunday, too,
Dat yaller gal's on my min',,
But Monday mawnin', befo' day,
De white folks got me flyin'!"

The small boys about here have sport by hunting hornet nests in the woods, and enticed me to go with them the other day. One found a nest that measured thirteen inches one way and fourteen the other. (The hornets were all out when we measured it!) It really was a wonderful thing, with its labyrinthine little passages, its paper-thin texture, and its curious shape. Hundreds of hornets once had a home in that, and descended from it to pillage the country round, till one small boy with a rifle brought it down.

I think I have enjoyed the study of hornets more than that of most insects this summer. I was lying on my couch one day some weeks ago, swatting flies that ventured too near when I noticed a hornet buzzing near me. I lay perfectly still, as he swooped down after artful circlings, and captured a fly that I had swatted and left lying

on the couch. Hornet evidently thought it was alive, for he took elaborate precautions not to frighten it away. He caught it between his legs and disappeared round the corner of the porch, evidently headed for his nest somewhere near by. I wondered if he would come back, so I prepared for him. I put another fly on the same spot where he had found the first one, identifying the place by means of a splash of green paint that had dropped on the couch.

In about ten minutes that hornet came back and went through the same maneuvers, capturing the fly by manifest strategy, and making his escape with it. He sat on the couch beside me for a while, washing his peevish little face with his front legs, and reminding me of a queer little old woman in antique garb,—bent over almost double, and with a sharp line of demarcation at his tight-corseted waist, and with his black and yellow petticoat drawn tight about his ankles.

Since then it has been my daily task to provide flies for that hornet, and his mate who now comes with him. I have tried experiments with them, placing flies on other spots beside the green paint, but its no use. They like the flavor of green paint with their food, or else they have learned that flies

snatched from there are more docile than elsewhere, requiring less care to avoid surprise. After some time the hornets have relaxed their vigilance, and do not go through quite the same precautions as at first, but pass more boldly to their prey,—perhaps appreciating my co-operation in the matter. They never molest me, but buzz around me in a social way, coming pretty close at times when occasionally I play tricks with them, by failing to have any fly in readiness when lunch times comes. Hornet will seize a fly and go through curious, prodding motions, as if kneading it with his bill. The two come back each day, and many times a day, to go through the same performance. Afternoon callers all have to be shown my trained pet hornets, and watch them snatch their food. If I leave the hornets too long without provender, they (the hornets, not the callers) buzz accusingly about my head, making me have something of the same sensations that I imagine a lion-tamer must feel.

But, after all, flies are the most fun to watch. There is nothing in the insect world that entertains me more than a common house fly. Persons who are bored, and who need an interest in life,

are recommended to take up the study of flies for the gaining of fresh impressions. No one can plead poverty or lack of laboratory material for the observation of flies, for any garbage can even in the city will afford specimens in plenty. A few hours invested in research work among flies will vastly quicken one's intelligence and liven his interest.

The front porch here is not screened, so that there are always a few flies about, offering themselves for experiment, and on rainy days there are national conventions of them gathered together to discuss the food situation. I am self-appointed curator of flies, which means that I kill them as fast as possible. I slay them in divers ways. For one thing, I put out traps, the old-fashioned kind made like a sugar-loaf, with cunningly contrived openings through which the fly has enterprise to come, but never intelligence to traverse again. The fly hasn't a backward-working mind, which shows that logic is distinctively human. Or perhaps his defection here is due to the fact that the openings in question are usually occupied by entering flies. At any rate, when they are once in, there they stay, buzzing and crawling about in monotonous fashion. When the trap is

sufficiently full, I pour boiling water over it to kill the flies and the germs they entertain at the same time.

It seems to me that monuments are ill-distributed in this world. I don't see why a monument hasn't been erected to the men who invented fly-traps and swatters. Think how many lives they must have saved by slaying the flies! On the other hand, I once read in a newspaper an account of "the meanest man in America," a tramp, who on being refused free food by a certain village, went about at night overturning all the flytraps on the back porches and setting the flies at liberty.

Then the swatter is great sport. I make fancy strokes or side-curves with the weapon, after the fashion of expert tennis players, and have gained great dexterity in landing the fly. I swat industriously, to keep my trusting hornets supplied with food, and to reduce the number of flies. When I go away in the afternoon and think of those poor lonesome hornets at home with no one to kill flies for them, I feel conscience-swatted.

I kill flies by poison, too. A spoonful of formaldehyde in a saucer of sweetened water will suffice, especially if there's something with an attractive odor, like fermented grape juice or

stale molasses, to draw them. Flies are far from being prohibitionists. You never see them on the water wagon, but just watch how they swarm over a truck loaded with beer! Doubtless when the country is actually "dry," the flies will be found emigrating to Mexico or other bibulous countries.

A fly approaches the saucer that inebriates but does not cheer, gingerly at first, lighting on the edge and disdaining to touch the contents. If I wave him away, and pretend to be annoyed by his presence, he is spurred to new interest and evinces eagerness to taste the drink. He will sip daintily but ostentatiously, and crawl about the edge as if flaunting his defiance in my face. He will always wash his face before and after drinking, but as he uses his feet for the purpose, I can't think he's much cleaner than he was before. Perhaps he does it only for the sake of example, before the children or outsiders, and really he doesn't like a cold plunge any better than his neighbors.

Presently, having tasted the drink, he will saunter round the saucer and light on the floor. His walk gradually becomes a bit leery, and he looks sea-sick or intoxicated. He begins to move round and round in a circle, the circle dizzily

narrowing as his ill-feeling increases, till at last he is whizzing madly without moving from the spot. As the speed decreases, his movements become more sporadic, till at last he hesitates, falters—is still.

On a rainy day, when the dampness drives the flies in from the grass and the trees, this *danse macabre* is intensely interesting to watch. When several score flies are spinning at once, in mad dervish fashion, one grows dizzy oneself.

The darkeys have a saying that if you kill one fly, ten more will come to its funeral, which I can believe to be true, for the crowd collects, whether impelled by sympathy or curiosity or thirst, however, it would be hard to say. When death approaches, a fly will turn his face to the ceiling, which has always been his sanctuary from a too impetuous swatter, and which he gazes at with longing.

I have noticed one interesting fact in connection with flies and colored folks. Darkeys are fond of flies, and protect them from white molestation wherever possible. Aunt Mandy, our elderly cook here, is annoyed by my efforts to exterminate the flies and seeks to forestall me in devious ways. If I press the battle to the gates in her own field,

bringing my swatter or my fly paper into her kitchen, she grumbles that she is monstrous busy and needs all the room, though she never under other conceivable circumstances needs all her room when I wish to visit with her. She complains that screens hurt her eyes to see through, and that fly paper upsets her, while she can give me a look of cold animadversion when she has to step around or over one of my medicated saucers on the porch.

"I never see such a to-do over a few little flies!" she complains to the skillet. "What is flies, anyway, dat dey is goin' to hurt you?"

"But, Aunt Mandy," I argued one day, with poised swatter in hand, "flies carry germs and give diseases."

She rattled the pans on the stove irately. "Huh! I been havin' flies roun' me all my bawn days, an' dey ain' never hu't me yit! My ol' mistis, what raised me fum a pickaninny, used to hab us bresh dem away fum de table wid a peach tree switch,—dat's all she did,— and folks was more healthier den dan dey is now."

"But, Aunt Mandy," I insisted, going after one agile fly which danced before me, "these flies are more intelligent and progressive than they used

to be. These flies now go to college and learn all about germs, and read the newspapers, to find out mischief they can do. They'll kill us if they can, so the only thing for us to do is to swat them first."

She put a stick of wood in the stove so she might have an excuse for slamming something.

"Shucks! Dey's been flies ever since Old Testament times, when Pharaoh was livin', an' de good Lawd done put dem here for some good puppose. I ain' gwine kill dem,—I jes' gwine bresh dem away offen my victuals."

I retired from the argument, to place a sheet of fly paper on the back porch and watch the efforts of the ensnared to extricate themselves. Occasionally one more active than his fellows would get away and crawl off, but with a lessened confidence in the world. Presently the kitten came playing up, and casually stuck a paw on the paper. When that stuck, she put down another to pry herself loose, and in a minute had all four feet fast prisoners. She tried to roll over and extricate herself in that way, which of course only made matters worse.

By the time I could catch the flying sheet with kitten inside it, she was a funny sight. I

had to wash her with soap and water and a brush, since when she licks herself reproachfully when she is in my neighborhood, and has not ventured on the porch again. I know that she went straight to tell her grievances to Aunt Mandy, who is feeding her far more than is good, to make up to her for her mishap. That kitten reminds me of a remark a woman made to me not long ago, concerning her discontent with herself and her environment. She said, "I'm like a fly stuck on a piece of fly paper. I can't get away from myself!" There are many like her, I fancy.

I like to psychoanalyze the flies. They are very inquisitive, for instance,—eager to investigate anything, taste anything, crawl over any object from a buzz-saw to a bald head. If they could record their observations concerning their surroundings, science would have new facts to collate. Then they are so contrary, always doing what you wish them not to! If you try to take a nap, one small fly can rouse you to a state of wakeful wrath. If you are trying to eat with one fly near, he can poison you by the rage he engenders in you as well as by the germs he deposits on your plate. Flies are the most obstinate creatures in the universe for they never give up

an undertaking. They don't know how to desist. They are dangerously ambitious, seeking the high places of the house, looking toward the ceiling as their real home, where only a tall man on a step-ladder could swat them. They are individualists, each one foraging for himself, with disregard for family ties.

Flies are useful, in providing many a woman an interest in life, an outlet for her activity, which otherwise might be wasted or misemployed. Fly-swatting releases all the evil impulses in humanity, gives one's antagonism an airing, keeps alive the healthy disposition to fight,—yet without harming society in any way,—and in general provides the same pleasurable thrill that any great sport does, like killing wild beasts. An excessively neat housekeeper, a sort of domestic dude, gains as much delight from swatting flies as any mightier hunter does from killing lions or elephants. The desire to smite and slay is inborn in man—and woman—and if given no outlet such as swatting flies, is liable to lead to destructive wars. If the former kaiser had relieved his feelings by swatting flies a few years back, the world might have been spared much more dangerous combat.

I think that there should be compulsory drill in fly-swatting, with all sorts of inducements for skill in the sport. There should be developed intercollegiate contests, with international meetings once a year. Fly-swatting affords healthful play for all the muscles and would be far less dangerous to students than football. Think of the different movements necessary to kill one fly sound in wind and wing,—running, jumping, beating with the arms, expansion of the lungs in ejaculations, stooping, and high leaping.

Fly-swatting falls naturally into two classifications, according to the motive that prompts it. Some women swat from a purely utilitarian impulse to rid the house of flies,—while others strike for entertainment, as I do. These are not my flies, and I feel no actual responsibility for their extermination, which fact in no wise lessens my interest in the sport. The Doctor says that my coat of arms should be a fly-swatter rampant, with a trap couchant on a sheet of fly paper, and that I'll find paradise dull if there aren't any flies there to chase.

As I watch the flies by day, by night I study the fireflies, but with how different emotions! These

lovely little things should have a more poetic name, I think, for what relation have they to the unclean, impertinent insect whose name they bear? I often wonder what is the physiological explanation of the luminosity of the lightning-bug or the glowworm, that intermittent, palpitant lamp that seems miraculous yet is a myriad nightly spectacle. How wonderful if we human beings could have such power of emitting light,—a sort of personal flash to be turned on at will! How it would aid one on dark streets at night, how advantageous it would be for finding lost articles in the hall closet, how tremendously helpful for locating the elusive keyhole at midnight! Yet maybe the cost of upkeep for that light would be too great, considering everything. Before I had it installed in me, I should wish to have an estimate as to how much of my vitality would be expended to keep it burning. Maybe the candle wouldn't be worth the game. We have no power of knowing what that firefly sacrifices to furnish illumination for us. If it only could speak, it would shed light on the subject, but perhaps it is ungrateful in us to be interested in it, as if it were only a subject for light reflection of human life.

There is no spectacle more beautiful than a dark

lawn on a Southern night, when countless fireflies are showing their dartling golden beams, like little living stars that lose their way and waver in a futile search for it. A firefly is a lovely and pathetic thing.

Pale flowers of flame
Torching the desert night,—
What are you?
Wandering thoughts that drift
Remorseful, unrelated, without rest,
From some tormented brain?
Burning words
Plunged from wild passion or delight or woe
To live in visible echoes, silent, winged?
Palpitant prayers
Of what unknown desires?
Bodiless yearnings, deathless, unexpressed,
Never to be fulfilled?
Ghost moths,
Ministers from some incommunicable beyond,
Muted, or messageless?
Or merely witless insects of an hour,
Suffering physical change?

III

PORCH REPTILES

WHY do people dislike reptiles? Is the horror of all creeping things instinctive, or merely a reflex of popular expression on the subject? Is it because reptiles are cold?—but that shouldn't be a valid objection in warm countries, at least. Is it because of a certain sliminess, real or imagined? But fish are slimy, too, and nobody despises them. Some reptiles are dangerous, it is true, but so are lions, for instance, and parrots with sharp beaks, and little dogs that snap at your heels,—but they arouse no shudder of repulsion. Is the human aversion to the snake, for example, based wholly on the thought that the devil once assumed his form, and do we have a lingering notion that the tenant still hangs about? Do we loathe toads—some of us, I mean—because colored persons and small boys tell us if we handle them we'll get warts on our fingers? Darkeys assure us that the tree toad is poisonous, and that its bite will kill,—

but is that folk-superstition, or has it any basis in science?

I had often been hearing the tree toads in the trees near the porch, but without being able to catch a glimpse of one, as they are extremely shy creatures and begin to move about only when the dusk falls. They can be heard croaking about coming or going rain, but they stay close in all day. The tree toad's protective coloring is a help to further his privacy. The little thing moves so softly that its brown body fairly blends with the brown of the tree trunk, and the mottled shading of the bark is reflected in the colors of the little creature itself. But I was eager to see one, so I finally asked Mose, the gardener, if he couldn't find one for me.

Mose's eyes opened wide at the request.

"Why, Mistis! Whaffur you wan' a tree toad?"

"I want to study it,—and I think it would make a nice pet."

The whites of his eyes rolled alarmingly. "Lawsy, Mistis! I ain' wantin' to ketch one ob dem things fo' you! I done hear dey's p'isonous. I'm skeered ob dem. Ef dey bites you, hit kills you."

"Oh, nonsense—I don't believe that's so."

"Wellum, Mistis, I ain' *know* dat hit's so, but I

ain' know hit *ain't* so. I allus hearn tell dat hit is. But hit mout be lack what dey says abouten frogs in general, dat dey'll kill you ef dey bite you, but dey ain' got no teeth to bite you wid!''

But Mose never found it convenient to catch a tree toad for me, I noticed. Prejudices are so difficult of dislodgment, and an operation to remove one from the mind is as difficult and painful as a major physical operation. Colored minds are particularly opposed to such efforts.

I notice that most persons, women in particular, have a like aversion to lizards. They look jumpy when a lizard darts near them—manifesting agitation of mind and of skirt—but lizards are harmless, useful, and beautiful creatures, which is vastly more than can be said of all women. Gila monsters are as rare in lacertian as in feminine form, so that it seems unjust for their reputation to incriminate the whole genus. I believe that the world is unfair to reptiles, and contend that there should be a revision and reversion of popular ideas concerning them.

This country porch, facing the near-by lake as it does, and with a brook running like a ruffle round the skirt of the hill, is a good place in which to study reptiles. I really like watching them. The

swinging couch in which I loaf makes an admirable point of vantage for such entertainment, since with my feet off the floor, I can observe at ease the creeping life about me.

Turtles are extremely entertaining. While I usually have to leave my porch to study them, occasionally, however, one does come to me, so that I may porch and turtle at the same time. But anyhow, the lake is close at hand. I walk along the water's edge, creeping with a reptilian stealth toward the turtles sleeping on the bank. I don't wish to catch them—I only wish to watch them—but they fail to recognize subtle distinctions of motive, hence are suspicious of me. On sighting me, they slide off into the water, with no sound and scarcely a ripple. Fish, now, leap noisily and splashily about, but all reptiles have a self-effacing manner, an apologetic air that is oddly pathetic. They seem to realize that they have few friends, and disbelieve that I am kindly disposed, merely a curious woman with no animosity.

Little turtles have a naïve, engaging way of coming up to take a look at the world that is amusing. I saw one round little fellow the other day who sat awkwardly and stodgily on the top of a floating log, peering with nearsighted eyes full of

crafty indifference at the passers-by. I wished to look closely at him, but he was annoyed in a stolid fashion, perhaps jealous of my designs upon his log, so I went by on the other side.

I have seen as many as a dozen turtles of assorted sizes, asleep on one log out in the lake. Again and again I have tried to come close to them without alarming them, sneaking up with soundless oar in my little boat. But it's no use! They always hear me, or see me, or smell my approach. I think they have a sentry posted on a "listening log," to warn the others, and when they once discover me, they slip down and are gone before I get there. When I row up, there's only a cross-eyed log, floating nakedly in the lake, to reward my efforts. I've thought of leaving a polite little note to explain my honorable intentions, but no doubt my diplomacy is insufficient to convince a turtle. It's disconcerting to be so misunderstood and thwarted in my hopes and plans. If I were a turtle, I shouldn't be such a misanthrope! I know of no basis for their suspicions, for I've never heard of anybody's molesting one of these turtles, but some creatures are utterly unreasonable in their suspicions. I am disconcerted that turtles persist in thinking me their foe—me, who'd like nothing

better than to shake their paws and sit beside them on a log to chat about matters of current interest.

I love to watch a turtle swim, with nothing showing above the water but his little round head, and with his bright glancing eyes alert for approach of danger. A turtle crossing the road in front of an automobile is an impressive spectacle. He goes deliberately, as if he would not hurry for the crowning or the uncrowning of kings. He seems to feel that the automobile is a *thing*, which therefore cannot hurt him, while a woman on foot is distinctly to be feared. He is the one wild creature that a motor car never agitates. You would think from his demeanor that he had a mud garage full of the latest makes of racers and limousines, so familiar is his scorn of them.

Turtles occasionally come on excursions up the hill, so that I may watch one separated from his fellows, and with the advantages of being on land instead of in the water. These creatures that live double lives are reticent as to investigation of their habits. I saw one walking lurchily in a flower-bed the other morning and descended to observe him at close range. He stood quite still when he saw me coming, for I was between him and the water,

so that he had no way of escape. He was a round, dumpy small fellow, perhaps taking his first journey away from home unchaperoned. After I had waited a few minutes to assure him that I meant no harm, I picked him up gingerly to look at him, but immediately he drew in his head and legs, leaving only the round shell visible. He stayed still as long as I held him, but when I put him on the ground, he waddled craftily off toward the lake. I think it was a mistake for me to pick him up, for now maybe he'll be afraid to come back, and I'd like to see him again.

I found a larger turtle once asleep on the bank halfway down the hill, where wild ferns grow. He was entirely in his shell, save for the right hind leg thrown out like a flying buttress. I crept up close to him, and squatted down beside him, to study him, but though I was as silent as I could be, he woke up to find me there. Turtles have a sixth or seventh sense where I am concerned. He looked at me first from inside his shell, his beady eyes blinking nervously. I made no sound nor motion, pretending to be the stump of a tree, and thus we remained for about five minutes. Finally he thrust out his head slowly, very slowly, with cautious cranings to and fro, twisting his head on

better than to shake their paws and sit beside them on a log to chat about matters of current interest.

I love to watch a turtle swim, with nothing showing above the water but his little round head, and with his bright glancing eyes alert for approach of danger. A turtle crossing the road in front of an automobile is an impressive spectacle. He goes deliberately, as if he would not hurry for the crowning or the uncrowning of kings. He seems to feel that the automobile is a *thing*, which therefore cannot hurt him, while a woman on foot is distinctly to be feared. He is the one wild creature that a motor car never agitates. You would think from his demeanor that he had a mud garage full of the latest makes of racers and limousines, so familiar is his scorn of them.

Turtles occasionally come on excursions up the hill, so that I may watch one separated from his fellows, and with the advantages of being on land instead of in the water. These creatures that live double lives are reticent as to investigation of their habits. I saw one walking lurchily in a flower-bed the other morning and descended to observe him at close range. He stood quite still when he saw me coming, for I was between him and the water,

so that he had no way of escape. He was a round, dumpy small fellow, perhaps taking his first journey away from home unchaperoned. After I had waited a few minutes to assure him that I meant no harm, I picked him up gingerly to look at him, but immediately he drew in his head and legs, leaving only the round shell visible. He stayed still as long as I held him, but when I put him on the ground, he waddled craftily off toward the lake. I think it was a mistake for me to pick him up, for now maybe he'll be afraid to come back, and I'd like to see him again.

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his warty brown neck, from side to side, with ever a crafty eye fixed on me. Then he poked out a leg at a time till he had mobilized the requisite number for escape in case I proved dangerous. We remained like that for another five minutes or so. He couldn't make out what my little game was, and I was curious to see what he'd do next.

His brown, curved back was covered with quaint irregular markings that reminded me of the mural drawings in the ruined Aztec temple of Mitla, in Mexico. His neck and ears, which needed washing (his mother isn't a bit careful of his toilet!), were of a dark, muddy brown, perhaps with some local color from the lake-bank, perhaps with a protective shading to make him less conspicuous, hence more secure from his enemies. On his neck and head were lines of bright yellow and scarlet, in addition to which there was one spot of yellow on each side of his head. The telescoped skin of his neck was like a gay ruff about his head. His front legs were marked with red, but no yellow, while his hind legs were all brown.

When I had examined him to my satisfaction, I indicated that the interview was at an end, by withdrawing—casting backward glances to see what Turtle meant to do. He watched me as

far as the curve of the path would permit, after which he drew back into his shell (I was peeking round the corner of the wall, to see) to finish his nap. He hadn't said a word during the whole time, so that I couldn't tell what he thought of me. I don't know the sound of a turtle's accents, though the statement in the Song of Solomon, that "the voice of the turtle is heard in the land" has always interested me. Perhaps modern turtles have lost their power of utterance. Of course, I don't hold with the unimaginative commentators that consider this a reference to the turtle-dove.

I combined a turtling and fishing expedition the other day, going out in a boat with a boy small enough to be used for bait, so that I had to be careful not to stick him on the hook, in place of the grasshoppers he had so diligently collected for the occasion. We didn't catch anything, to my gratification, and the boy's grief. I don't go fishing to catch fish, but merely to fish.

We stopped to examine some small pools near the bank, where tadpoles were darting about. The child watched them for a minute or two without speaking, then he cried admiringly, "Ain't they funny little things?—just like bedbugs with tails!"

Snakes are great fun, too. I've been much interested in the shape of snakes, for it seems incredible that they can get around as quickly as they do, with such unconventional forms. I've seen pictures of the Garden of Eden, with the serpent tempting Eve, standing up gracefully on the tip of his tail, and conversing affably. I should like to see snakes like that! I've seen them only flat on the ground, which isn't so dignified—though a snake is always graceful. There's always a certain beauty about him as he glides across the ground, or when he is coiled, a proud humility in his movements. He's graceful, too, when's he's angry and ready to strike.

I used to visit in West Texas, where it was one of the local sports to ride across the prairie and shoot rattlesnakes on horseback. (We were on horseback, not the snakes.) They lived in prairie-dog holes, and could be seen sunning themselves on the mounds at the entrance to the dog houses—the mounds which were prairie dog and snake equivalents of porches. I once shot a rattler that had eleven rattles and a button, which means that he was twelve years old.

Snakes were so plentiful on the Texas prairies, that men made a business of catching them for the

market, to sell them by the pound to museums, circuses and the like. Once I went to see the stock in trade of a snake dealer in Abilene. He had hundreds of snakes in an immense box, and lifting the lid, he would pick up a handful of squirmers and pet them. He offered to let me stroke one, but my interest in reptiles did not extend to fondling. He said that they were harmless, since he had extracted the venom, but he was overconfident, as not long after my visit, he was bitten by one of his charges and died. How sharp indeed must be the tooth of a thankless serpent!

I haven't seen any rattlesnakes in Virginia, the only dangerous specimens about here being the water moccasin, the highland moccasin and the spreading adder. There are moccasins in the dark pools by the little stream, but they don't molest anyone who lets them alone. I've seen black snakes, alarmingly large, but said to be harmless, along the fence by the blackberry vines, but they seem as eager to avoid an encounter as I am, so we haven't struck an acquaintance yet. One black snake was discovered placidly sunning himself on the ledge of the front porch not long ago, and only yawned and winked his eye at a noisy automobile that snorted up and stopped beside it.

And a country neighbor told us recently that he had been sitting on his front porch, reading, when he heard a stir beneath his chair, and looked down to see a big spreading adder, just ready to strike.

The other day Mose, who has a standing request from me to bring me anything he finds, living or dead, brought me some little snakes about a foot long, which he had killed in the coal bin. They were hanging over a stick, so I examined them closely.

"What kind of snakes are these, Mose?" I asked, twisting the stick around for a better look at them.

"Dey's no-biggers," he said.

"What do you mean by that? What's their name?"

"Dat's de onliest name I is ever heerd fo' dem, Mistis. Dey don' grow no bigger, you sees."

"That's a dandy name for them!" I commented thoughtfully. "Very symbolic. I've known people who never grow any bigger. I know plenty of no-biggers."

"Yas'm," Mose grinned, as he walked away, trailing the little snakes across the stick, to hang them on the fence so the rain would come.

I fell to musing concerning the unnatural history type Mose had suggested to me. Why are no-biggers? Why does that certain little snake stop growing, when other reptiles keep on gaining in length and waist measure? Does he realize that he's a case of arrested development—and does the knowledge pain him?

Why are certain men no-biggers? Is it because a definite vital element necessary for proper development is taken away from their lives at a critical time? Might a healthy mind become a no-bigger, for instance, if married to a bank account that necessitated no further exertion for a livelihood? Is no-biggerness contagious by any chance? Might a husband or wife become one, having unknowingly married into such a family? Young ambition is a tender thing easily stunted, and zeal may be stultified by a chilly atmosphere, no doubt.

Is one a moral no-bigger because the stimulus of exterior influence is too soon removed—as for instance when a church-worker in a small town comes to the city and becomes religiously quiescent? It is pretty certain that moral no-biggerness is contagious, and infectious—so that if churches could only discover the antitoxin, all

would be well. Science has discovered the efficacy of injecting certain vital principles into arrested physical organisms, causing stunted children to resume their growth. Why shouldn't some millionaire establish a foundation for investigation of the causes and the cure for the mental no-biggers, the moral morons? Yet possibly there are too many of us to receive adequate treatment. A classified list would bring embarrassment in any circle, though laboratory research and inoculations might be carried on in secret.

Lizards are another of my reptilian delights. They are shy creatures, but they seem to know that I won't harm them, hence they come freely up on the porch, perhaps because of the coolness of the cement on warm days, and the warmth of my welcome. I am amazed by the quickness of the lizard's motions. He's the swiftest living thing, I dare say, for if he moves at all he goes like greased lightning, while if he pauses, he stops stone-still. I have often been swinging in the couch and have seen a lizard dart across the floor before he saw me. When his bright glancing eyes would spy me, he would either dart away at once, or stop dead-still to see what I meant to do. I would stay as quiet

as possible to watch him. There was one here this morning that fixed his jeweled eyes upon me for several minutes before he shot away. As he gave one last look, he winked at me—I'm positive he did!

Some lizards are here every day, fearless if I'm alone, but shy in the presence of a porch full of people. Some of my lizards are all green, some are brown, some have green stripes down their backs, with lighter shadings on the under side, while others are of a lovely bronze-green that shimmers in the sun. I frequently see here the blue-tailed lizards that are supposed to be a rare variety. Occasionally a blood-red lizard, a salamander, comes to visit me, a flashing guest that makes a whole day brighter by his passing. I suppose it must be rather dangerous to have such conspicuous beauty, however, and the less brilliant shades are safer. It is a rich experience to me to see a salamander—like seeing Shelley plain! I wish there were more of them about here, as there are in the Catskills, for instance, where they come out on sunny days in early summer, to enjoy the open road, when there are few passers-by. When I see one, I think of Walter De la Mare's poem, *The Little Salamander to Margot*:

“ When I go free,
I think I'll be
A night of stars and snow,
And the wild fires of frost shall light
My footsteps as I go;
Nobody—nobody will be there
With groping touch or sight,
To see me in my bush of hair
Dance burning through the night.”

The lizards race about in the trees here, too, greeny-brown creatures whose color melts into the shades of the bark so that only their motion enables me to distinguish them from the bark itself. They play up and down the big oak tree beside the porch, affording themselves and me an endless amount of entertainment.

The quick impetuosity, the darting impulses such as lizards and some human beings (notably the very young,) show, are beautiful and pathetic to me, so that I feel misgivings for the future. Does the lizard find that the world lives up to his young ideals of it? Does he hurt his swift, lithe young body against the sharp corners of life? I fancy lizards all die young, for how could such a being creep about with age and rheumatism?

But entertaining as are all the other reptiles, I think that toads have given me more pleasure

this summer than any of the family. There are plenty of specimens for observation here, from the thousands of tiny thumb-nail beings to the bull-frogs in the lake. One cannot put his foot down without raising a dust of toads here, as lively as crickets and as small as flies. How could these tiny things come so far from the water? I feel that there must be some method of toad-culture besides the tadpole school, for these wee infants couldn't travel so far. There must be an enormous mortality among baby toads, for otherwise mortals would be crowded off this planet.

I have grown especially fond of toads this summer. Down in Texas I used to be interested in the horned toads, little creatures as round and flat as doll pancakes, with horny protuberances over their bodies, that go gliding about in the sand as swiftly as lizards, and that are really closer akin to lizards than to toads. The children used to tie cords about their necks and lead them around like pet dogs, which was unsatisfactory to the toads, of course, but seemed to give amusement to the children. Mischievous male college students have been known to lead them into class-rooms to startle the girls, and eastern tourists buy them for curiosities. I saw recently in a book of natural

history sketches for children, a picture claiming to represent the horned toad, which was nothing but a lumpish, amiable hop-toad with a little horn back of each ear. I consider that persons who write and illustrate books on natural history should be expected at least to have seen a picture of the specimen described.

The toad has never been appreciated, either for his utilitarian helpfulness in eating insects, or for his lovable qualities of character. Those who think of toads as stolid, unresponsive creatures, devoid of sentiment, are mistaken. Toads have loving hearts and show a faithfulness of affection unknown to many fashionable pets. I should like to head a movement for the cultivation of sympathy with these batrachian creatures.

I like to watch the toads as they lump lurchily about in the flower-beds, or sluggishly sleep in the damp shadows, or sit still winking their near-sighted eyes at me. But for long my interest in them was general, in toads collective, not individual. For many evenings I noticed that two toads of about the same size came up on the front porch about dusk, and remained for a couple of hours. I thought it somewhat strange that my visitors should conform so in size and number each

evening, but for some time I failed to grasp the fact that they were the same toads each evening. I had been studying them, talking to them, and feeding them on flies I had swatted, but when I awoke to the knowledge that I was having steady callers, my interest was enormously increased.

Touched by their sociability, I became more cordial in my reception, more lavish in my offerings of refreshment, and they in turn evinced more plainly their fondness for my society. Yes, they did, too! Since then, I have watched them nightly and gain a vast amusement from them. I never see or hear them come, but when we come out on the porch after supper, we find them sitting there, or else, if supper is delayed, I may look down to find the two squatting silently beside my rocking-chair. I never can rock with any ease after sundown, lest I kill one of my friends. They appear as silently as the stars.

I try various experiments with them, such as turning the porch light on suddenly, to make them blink their eyes. I tickle them softly by drawing a stalk of Queen Anne's Lace across their backs, gently agitating the flower. The toad likes this immensely, and will turn his back and sides round in turn, to have them stroked. Sometimes I

scratch their backs gently with a stiff little stick, which demonstration they likewise enjoy. They are affectionate beings, and squat fearlessly on the hem of my dress, hop all about my chair, and let me try any experiment with them that I wish.

I feed them with flies, swatted or steam-killed and sun-dried. But it is necessary to give the fly a verisimilitude of life, otherwise the toad will not take it. He is more exacting on this point than the hornets are. Toads have a Kosher regulation about having their flies fresh-killed, and will accept no cold storage products, however attractively offered. So I try in various ways to make the fly seem alive. If I wave a fan high above a group of insects on the floor, the gentle motion of the air causes the flies to move in a life-like manner, and the toads leap lithely upon their supper. But if I fan too closely, these callers evince a chilled disfavor, so I have to desist. The best method, I have found, is to take a needle and very long thread, leaving a fly on the end of the thread which has no knot in it. Toady will make a quick spring and capture his prey, which slips unhindered down his throat, and he feels he has done something worthy of praise in getting such a brisk insect. Sometimes I merely shove a fly forward with a

quick, concealed motion, that sends it toward the toad, and lo, it is gone! I occasionally vary the menu by rolling little balls of soft bread toward them, but flies are more delicious so I do not waste much time in making bread-pills.

I have named these pets Nip and Tuck. I can tell them apart, though the household refuses to believe it—but I have noticed that Nip has an almost invisible hair line of white down the middle of his back, while Tuck has merely spots.

It is amusing to watch one of these toads grab a fly. He never seems to discover the fact that these flies he gets at night are dead, hence not requiring the same tactics of caution necessary in the day, with living insects. He creeps up behind the fly, watches it blinkingly for a second as I jerk it about on its thread or wave my fan, then makes one quick spring, licks out a lightning tongue, and the fly has gone to its last home. Then he settles back with a hunch, swelling with pride in his prowess, the soft part under his throat throbbing like the soft spot in the top of a young baby's head. Sometimes Nip and Tuck start for the same fly at once, though usually they take turns politely. Nip shows more enterprise, on the whole, than Tuck.

The other night Nip acted comically. He mistook a lump of mud on the floor for a beetle, and circled round it, waiting for it to come alive, but no sound nor motion ensued. Then Nip began stealthily to stalk toward the object, gazing fixedly at it, and crawling with curious movements. He would crawl for a bit, then walk, with a creeping lurch comical to see, like a lion stalking its prey, in a laughable contrast between his size and the ambitious gait. Several times Nip would make a quick leap at the lump, but would not attempt to swallow it, since he was evidently doubtful of the nature of this bug that neither moved nor made any noise. Finally, though with reluctance and backward glancings, he gave it up, as if deciding that lumps of mud are not nutritious. Nip often stalks his prey, I have noticed since, but Tuck always confines himself to the hop. A traveler from Japan recently told me that Japanese toads never hop, but always crawl in this fashion, so perhaps there is something Oriental about Nip. I recently heard of a Japanese student's definition of a frog, as "an animal that stands up in front and sits down behind."

I wonder what is the relation between Nip and Tuck—if they are brothers or merely friends? Do

they spend their whole time together, or simply meet by appointment each evening at the nasturtium bed, for their call on me? They are silent guests, giving never a croak in response to any blandishments from me, but there are so many human callers that are oppressively talkative, that their silence is grateful. Fanny Burney's diary tells of a woman about the court who had pet toads whom she taught to croak in different keys in response to her questions. I wish I knew her system.

The Doctor who comes almost as regularly as the toads, but to see Lucia, not me, has tried to persuade me to let him try tricks with my pets, after the fashion of that mentioned in Mark Twain's *Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*, but I indignantly refuse. I wonder, however, if, as the Professor suggests, I am pauperizing these young toads by removing from them the natural incentive of hunger to provide their own living. When I ask Nip and Tuck if this is true, they are noncommittal, and since they do not accuse me, I shall continue to feed them.

The tree toads come out at dusk, too, scarcely visible in their coats of green and brown, but they are not silent, for their little whistling croaks may

be heard every evening, and in the daytime when there's rain. The darkey says:

“ De tree toad, he ain' got but one song,
‘Hit ain' gwine rain no mo’;
Hit ain' gwine rain, hit ain' gwine snow,
Hit ain' gwine to rain, no mo-o-o!’”

You can tell that a tree toad is thinking about atmospheric conditions, but of what is an ordinary toad thinking, when he looks at you so fixedly with his eyes blinking so fast? I'd give more than a penny for Nip's thoughts at times.

I caught a funny little frog in my boat the other day, a tiny fellow with only one eye, and not even a socket on the other side. He was hopping about in the bottom of the boat when I entered; I let him jump up on one of the oars and I looked at him closely. He didn't seem afraid of me, but winked at me merrily with his one eye. I put him in the water near the boat, but when I held out the oar to him, he got on it again, and settled himself down for a sociable time. I kept him in the boat with me till I had finished my row, then left him in the water by the edge of the lake, as I thought he might be lonely in the boat all night. He swam

briskly off as I stood watching him, as nice a little creature as ever I saw!

I have never made as close acquaintance with the bullfrogs in the lake as with the hop-toads. The first night I was here, I thought that autos were passing during all the hours, and in the morning I inquired the reason for such excessive travel, to be derisively told that my auto horns were the honk-honks of the bullfrogs in the lake. Boys come to the water at night with lanterns to catch the frogs, sometimes bringing a singer with a deep basso who strikes a low note, answered by a watery boom. The light is flashed on the spot from which the sound comes, and the frog "croaks" in another sense, to furnish legs for a feast on the bank.

Tish sings several "reels" concerning the toad, which are considered to be ancient colored folklore. I induced her to repeat the following for me the other day.

"I was walkin' 'long de new-cut road,
An' I met de tarrepin an' de toad.
Every time de toad would spring,
De tarrepin cut de pigeon-wing.

CHORUS:

Pickin' on de bottle, pickin' on de bottle!
Is she comin' to town?

My ol' Mistis promised me
When she died she'd set me free.
But she libed so long an' died so po'
She left ol' Sambo pullin' on de hoe.

CHORUS:

Pickin' on de bottle, pickin' on de bottle!
Is she comin' to town?"

I haven't the slightest idea what that chorus means nor has Tish, because the ancient folk-songs handed down merely orally have their meaning and sound changed sometimes so that it is impossible to reconstruct the original version.

A different version of the first stanza came to me from Aunt Peggy, the chorus in this case being the refrain of another old song, after the fashion of darkey folk-songs which often are what the negroes call "a mixtry."

"As I come 'long de new-cut road
I met Mr. Tarrepin an' Mr. Toad.
De Toad began to pat an' sing,
While Tarrepin cut de pigeon-wing.

CHORUS:

Pretty Betty Martin, tiptoe, tiptoe,
Pretty Betty Martin, tiptoe fine!"

Tish was sweeping the porch the other morning to the tune of a ballad which I surreptitiously

took down, which she said was called *Who Stole the Lock?*

“ My ol’ friend was as cute as a mouse;
 He stole down to de chicken-house.
 He took all de chickens dat were in sight,
 Den says to me, ‘ My friend, good-night!’ ”

CHORUS:

Well, who stole de lock? I don’t know.
 Who stole de lock fum de hen-house do’?
 I’ll find out befo’ I go
 Who stole de lock fum de hen-house do’.

Down in de hen-house on my knees,
 I thought I heerd a chicken sneeze.
 ‘Twas de ol’ rooster sayin’ his prayers,
 Singing a hymn to de hens upstairs.

CHORUS:

As I went ’cross de forty-acre fiel’,
 A rattlesnake bit me on de heel.
 I turned right roun’ for to do my best,
 An’ my left foot stuck in a hornet’s nest!”

CHORUS:

The negro concerns himself more with the unpoetic creatures of nature than does the white man, while the conventional concepts of beauty, such as the nightingales, violets, and so forth are cele-

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CHORUS:

The negro concerns himself more with the un-poetic creatures of nature than does the white man, while the conventional concepts of beauty, such as the nightingales, violets, and so forth are cele-

brated by the whites more often. In this respect the colored mind is more ingenious and gifted with appreciation and imagination, less confined to unoriginal ideas. It takes more vividness of thought to think of a toad or a serpent as poetic material, than to string together rhymes about a mocking bird, as the hornet is a more novel character in lyrics than the butterfly. There is a chummy relationship between the darkey and his subjects for rhyme that would make the fortune of any commercial-minded poet who could develop it. But he can't. I think perhaps the reason for this difference is that the negro is essentially a child who never grows up, whose ideas are never standardized by social or literary rule, and who sings because he's really fond of what he likes, instead of merely rhyming about ideas and things that precedent has accepted. What great poetry we should have if only children and darkeys knew grammar and words enough to express their emotions!

Postscript.

Last night a tragedy happened! I was out on the porch as usual amusing myself with Nip and Tuck, while Lucia and the Doctor were sitting

near, watching us. An enormous black beetle, with hard black eyes and terrifying pincers, came scuttling toward us, whereat Lucia drew her skirts about her ankles with a little "*Ugh!*" of alarm, as he scudded past her, and the Doctor said, "Let's give it to Nip or Tuck."

"Oh, no, it's too large!" I protested.

"Then I'll cut it up!" he retorted.

He picked up a sharp stick from the steps and with it decapitated the beetle, which lay on its back, its legs wildly waving in air, and its nippers snapping viciously. Before I could realize what was being done, the Doctor had offered that head to Nip, who swallowed it with one leaping gulp, or at least, he got it partly down. There it stuck in his throat, too big for the small throat, the nippers horribly biting and clawing!

I tried to snatch the thing out of poor little Nip's mouth, but he choked it down before I could get hold of it.

My poor little toad flattened out, and heaved and lurched about in agony, for those grinding beaks were evidently gripping his insides. His body was convulsed. He would lie flat on the floor for one instant, and then lurch unsteadily about, with heavings and writhings of his muscles, those two

longest feelers still sticking unfeelingly out of the corners of his mouth.

I watched him with tears running down my cheeks. I couldn't help it, to think that one of us whom he had so trusted to give him the right food, had thus wronged him!

I turned in bitter reproach upon the one responsible for this. "I think if I were a doctor I'd know how to do something in a case like this!" I cried accusingly.

"I don't know how to cure toads; I only know how to kill them in the laboratory! I'm sorry," he mumbled, yet with a half-concealed grin. I never had noticed before that the Doctor has a cruel mouth, something like that of a catfish.

Presently Nip crawled off the porch, tumbling helplessly down the steps, one at a time, and crept into the violet bed. I followed him yearningly till he was lost in the shadows, feeling miserable because there was nothing I could do. He went off to die alone, and will never understand that I would have saved him from this if I could,—but at least I'm thankful I had nothing to do with this. The Doctor *seemed* repentant, but I told him coldly that his remorse didn't help Nip.

I shall miss that little toad like a real, human

friend. I wonder if lonesome Tuck will come back alone now. Nip is tuck and Tuck is left, as the Professor said when he was told of the occurrence. Well, it isn't wise, I dare say, to set your affections too much on any object, lest disappointment come. But he was such a loving little thing. "Hath a toad affection?" Yes, undoubtedly! And now he is gone! It's a lonesome world!

Second Postscript. Several nights later.

Tuck comes back alone each night now, and hops about after me as if asking where his comrade has gone. I feed him as usual and try to make him happy, but with a mournful heart. I never did care as much for Tuck as for Nip, though I hope he never knew the difference.

IV

BIRD STUDY FROM A COUNTRY PORCH

I'd rather be a bird than anything else, if I couldn't be a human. A June bug, with its joyous irresponsibility, offers attractions, if children wouldn't swing me by a string; an angleworm enjoys considerable privacy, yet has little outlook on the world; a field-mouse is beautiful, but the winter must be cold for him, with no hot-water pipes in the ground; and so few people appreciate the loving nature of a toad that I might feel neglected. I'd like a lizard's energy and speed, and a chameleon's adaptability to surroundings—but on the whole, I'd rather be a bird.

I love to watch the birds from my couch on the porch. I can study them close at hand, for they are rather fearless—or at a distance, with my good binoculars. When I first wake up on my slumber porch, the birds are already aroused, telling each other how bright the dawn is, and excitedly saying that Mose is plowing for a new crop of corn, and

that there are luscious worms to be had for the picking up. I raise myself on my elbow, to see if my little brook is still there, and sink back relieved to find that it is. I have a fear that someone might spirit it away while I sleep,—since some things are too lovely to last. It says good morning to me very nicely from its little pebbly bed, and it has had a good sleep and happy dreams, thank you!

The family of wrens that have their nest in the bird house just over my couch are thoroughly and noisily astir long before I get down. There are three little wrens, all mouth and eyes, that cheep for breakfast which Mother and Father Wren cannot provide fast enough. The parents fly back and forth with incessant worms, exhaustless bugs. As papa or mamma perches on the bird porch at the front of the house, there are agitated flutterings of unfeathered wings and chirping cries of hunger and delight. How good is a worm with the morning dew on him! How delicious a bug that scrambles down your throat!

Those wrens are like human fathers and mothers in that they spend practically their whole time and energy supplying the demands of their vociferous offspring, getting nothing out of existence for themselves but a roof over their heads and the less

choice morsels at the table. Yet they seem contented,—strange are wrens!

The wrens from the box on the other side of the porch are teaching their young to fly. I arrived on the scene the other morning just at the right moment to see the little ones flutter in scared venture to the nearest tree, encouraged by older chirps. What rapturous moment of hazard, what palpitations of fearful bliss! One would never have supposed, merely from looking through a door the size of a quarter, or from rocking back and forth on the narrow porch itself, that this was such a large world. There are so many green branches that stretch invitingly, yet they are dizzily far away for wings that have not yet learned coördination.

Father Wren holds a worm in his mouth and flies ahead of the youngster, flies till the small one cheeps with fatigue in following him, and then gives him the worm, while Mother flutters anxiously about to lend encouragement and sympathy. She thinks that Father is a bit exacting with such young birds, though of course he means well. Whenever the baby stops, the mother quivers down beside it, even though Father flies ahead with a masculine imperative flutter of the wings as if to say, "Hurry up there, or this worm will get

away!" John Burroughs says that birds don't teach their young to fly, but what were those wrens doing? They may have been merely giving an aviation exhibition. It is fascinating to watch each nervous flutter, each uncertain gyration, as the young bird attains the limb aspired to.

Still another pair of wrens from the box over the porte-cochère, having successfully reared a family, fed them, and given them instruction in ground and fancy flying, have dismissed the youngsters from their minds and started in to make another nest. This time they have moved into the box over the library window, like urbanites feeling the urge to move at intervals, even though their new home is no more commodious, has no wider outlook than the old. This is the selfish couple that in the spring, having chosen their house, filled the adjoining one with sticks and moss, to prevent any rival occupancy.

Madam Wren had her breakfast in bed each morning before the babies made their arrival, her devoted husband serving it to her himself. Her fare was varied and abundant, I noticed, and I can testify that he was a good provider.

Perhaps I am interfering with nature's economic scheme when I give flies to the birds. But it is

such fun to watch the birds eat, that each morning I spread my catch out on the broad stone ledge by the steps, and wait to see who comes to partake of my hospitality. The birds have learned that food will be ready for them, and so my porch furnishes continuous entertainment. The callers do not understand this clock-like regularity of flies that courteously lie down and die, and let themselves be swallowed without resistance, but they approve of it.

The birds come flying onto the porch, then walk across the ledge with mincing, finical steps, looking alertly about to see if I have any gun or "nigger-shooter" with me to menace them. Then they pick up the flies daintily, and are gone. The flies look like poor imitations of life, for they have been swatted out of all recognition, or else steam-killed in a trap, then dried in the sun, so they are limp, flattened objects, but the birds eat them with appetite, as do the lizards and the toads. I am always careful to keep the porch swept clean of the formaldehyded victims, for they might poison birds or toads or hornets, so they are meticulously swept up in the dust-pan and burned.

Lucia and the Professor sometimes help me spread my board, but the Doctor will have none of

it, contending that I am making gardens too safe for bugs and destroying the self-respecting independence of the birds. The Professor merely glances at him with a rather cold look in his blue eyes at such remark, and elaborately assists me to set the table. Anyhow, I don't think I should like to trust the Doctor with feeding any of my pets, after his disastrous experiment with Nip. Poor little Nip!—how I do miss that toad!

I wish I could offer some refreshment for the humming birds, but I don't know how to manage it, and anyhow, they seem pretty competent to look out for themselves. There is a thick growth of scarlet sage against the edge of the porch, in front of my couch, and all day long the humming birds come and go, tasting the honey. A humming bird is grace incarnate, with its unimaginable swiftness and ease of motion. It poises on whirring wings, dipping its sharp beak into the cup of the flower, and making a vibrant humming like the noise of an airplane far, far off in the blue. It utters sharp little needle-like cries, so low that one has to listen well to hear them, but quite audible if one is still. Sometimes there are two or three of them here at once about the bed, with their translucent bodies as lovely as light.

The other day a young boy came with a box which he said had a present for me in it. I heard a faint rustle inside, and asked, "What is it?" He refused to tell me, so I opened the box stealthily to see what living creature was inside—to find a baby humming bird the boy had caught and saved for me.

I almost wept as I saw the wee, frightened thing, so shaken and forlorn, worn out with beating its baby wings against the prison bars, lying faint and unable to fly. I took it out softly and laid it on a broad leaf in some shrubbery near by, out of the way of cats, and left it. After some time, when I looked again, it was not there, so I hope it found its mother and its nest again, but I feel sorry when I think of that wild creature so cowed and exhausted. It never can again be the joyous thing it was before, with such swift, tumultuous wings of light.

The humming birds come out at night to suck the sweets from the flowers. Perhaps the evening's damps bring out a new nectar, or perhaps dangers are less menacing than in the day. One flew across me the other night as I lay on my couch, almost brushing my cheek with its wings, as it went to the star-jasmine vine on the wall. It was dark, on a cloudy night, after rain had fallen.

There's a humming bird's nest in a tree near by, a delicate, almost invisible thing but clear enough when looked at through the field glasses. I found it by accident when I was gazing at the tree. It is high up, so there's no way for me to examine it closely. It looks like a small lump on the branch, and only by seeing the bird go into it did I discover what it was.

The blackbirds are decorative creatures as they fly and run over the lawn. They run more than any bird that I know and can race at Marathon speed with dancing movements. They are attractive to look upon, with their glossy, inkish plumage and their bright, glancing heads, but they have unamiable dispositions. They quarrel as they dance insultingly around each other, uttering raucous cries, and flapping their wings in vituperative gestures. They usually come by twos, but one morning lately there were seven on the lawn at once, the older ones flying about, back and forth across the open space, and calling to the young ones with tutorial accents.

The jay birds are even more ill-natured than the blackbirds, for they have a downright vicious temper, and can teach swear words to a sailor's

parrot. The darkeys say that the jay birds all belong to the devil and spend every Friday in torment, carrying sand for their master, which is why you never see a jay bird on Friday. I don't make affidavit that this is true—and I'm eternally intending to find out about it, by watching for them on the next Friday, but something always comes up to prevent.

I never have seen more pronounced exhibition of tantrums than that shown by two blue jays the other day, each holding one end of a long angle-worm and contending for possession of the whole, with no consideration at all for the sensations of the worm. They would momentarily drop their victim, to fly at each other with angry, extended wings, shrieking accusations. Poor worm! The struggle ended by breaking him in two, at which the birds gulped, each his half, and flew away sulkily.

There was a blue jay the other afternoon that spied a beetle and couldn't decide whether it was safe to attack it or not. His indecision on the subject reminded me of a woman's mental attitude of variableness. The inability of the average home-keeping woman, she of the sheltered swirl of domesticity in which married women live, to make

a decision and stick to it, is at once ludicrous and pathetic. She circles round a decision, she sniffs at it, then darts off alarmed. At once wavering and obstinate, she is unable to make up her mind alone, and she is suspicious of any outside efforts to assist her toward a decision.

I saw an interesting exhibition of bird psychology the other day. I was watching a mother wren and her baby on the lawn, the infant fluttering about on the grass in efforts to fly. Just then the cat came round the corner and sprang at the baby bird. I sprang an instant later, but I was not needed, for that mother flew in pussy's face, flapping her wings and screaming in such fury that the cat quickly slunk back out of sight. It was like seeing a perambulator turn into an army tank in action, or hearing a lily roar like a lion.

I was watching a couple of birds escaped from the nest and making adventurous efforts at flying, when Aunt Peggy, who had stopped by the porch to chat with me, looked at them with an indulgent laugh. "Dey's jes' lack deshere young folks in de house. Dey's so proud o' deyselves 'case dey is grown up. Dey ain' neber been grown-up befo'."

The song sparrows, or grass sparrows, as the darkeys call them, because they build their nests

near the ground, are here in numbers, daintily small birds that flit over the grass and in the shrubbery. They have a soft, sweet song of a plaintive minor strain that is beautiful. I have often found their nests in the blackberry vines and once in the fork of a peach tree in the orchard, not three feet from the ground, and in full view of cats, snakes, and other foes. But the young birds were reared in safety, and made their entry into the world unharmed. I took the nest away after they were gone, because they would not use it any more, and kept the cunningly contrived house of grass and horsehair.

A baby song sparrow was in a tree near my porch, just learning to fly this morning. I kept hearing a wee chirping that I couldn't locate, though I was sure it came from that one tree. I walked round and round the tree, peering up into the branches, but the small thing kept perfectly motionless, only uttering that woeful chirp. Presently his mother heard him and came darting to where he sat, so that I could see him then as he fluttered his pin-feather wings in relief. Encouraged by her presence, he essayed a non-stop flight, and swept wobblingly across the open space to another tree, where he alighted with gasping

chirps of joy, the mother twittering about him, praising him for his courage and skill.

The English sparrows, noisy, impertinent little creatures like spoiled children that you cannot yet dislike, annoy their more refined cousins in various ways. Once a little girl was with me on the porch, watching a couple of young sparrows on the walk, and laughing at their antics. Finally she remarked, "Those sparrows are cunning little cusses, ain't they?"

The mocking bird furnishes more entertainment than any other of the feathered friends about here. He is the most versatile and temperamental of all birds, and is on his job more steadily than any other, since he doesn't even take Friday off like the jay bird, and he has a night shift as well as one for the day. The mocking bird will furnish more music to the twenty-four hours than any other bird that ever flew, if he has his freedom and is feeling good. He'll even sing if you put him in a cage, but less happily, and his eyes may grow dull and his song be stilled in prison. A mocking bird in a cage is sadder to contemplate than Napoleon at St. Helena.

The extent and variety of the mocker's reper-

toire are sufficient to make a victrola hang its horn in shame. The skylark's much advertised unpremeditated art is weak compared with his raptures, and the nightingale, who sings only at night and stops even that by the middle of June, is fairly bested in his own field by this all-day performer.

Besides having an inimitable music of its own, this bird can reproduce the song of any rival. He can mimic almost any sound in nature or in art, and make it seem more like itself than the original. The indignant rumblings of a setting hen, the *peep-peep* of young turkeys lost in the tall grass, the profane vituperations of the blackbirds, the whistle of the small boy summoning his playmate, together with an infinity of other sounds are given back with verisimilitude by this amazing bird.

He is not only mime but ventriloquist as well. From the top of a tall tree he will project the *cheep-cheep* of a lost chick, causing the distracted parent hen to race in circles round the trunk. This joke never seems to lose its zest for him, since it never occurs to the hen to call the roll of her brood and find out if any are missing. Again he will give the *cluck-cluck* that promises a nice, squirmy worm, whereon the chicks come flying in

with pin-feather wings all spread in hungry haste. As they gather round the spot where mother ought to be, that outrageous joker will sound the hawk's very *ya-a-a-!* in their midst and send them terror-stricken to cover. It usually takes the hysterical hen half an hour to recollect her brood, and the earth never seems the same to them again.

The other morning I heard a terrible stirabout in the garden and went to investigate. I found a mocking bird and blue jay on the wall, shrieking damnatory adjectives at each other and waving contemptuous wings. The jay had the grace to fly away at the approach of a lady, but that unblushing mocker strutted up and down as if he had vanquished his adversary.

But he does worse things than quarrel with a blue jay. A couple of redbirds who have leased the top flat in a poplar tree near the porch are the objects of unneighborly annoyance on the part of the mocker. When the young husband is away, his wife perches herself on the edge of her nest and cries in tones of petulant pathos, "Oh, Jim! Oh, Jim! Oh, Ji-i-im! Come! Come! Come! Swee-et! Swe-e-t! Swe-e-et!" Fancy if you can her feelings when from the oak trees comes an

exact mimicry of her wifely appeal. As soon as the mocking bird attracts her attention, the unmannerly wretch fairly dances on the bough and burbles in glee.

This bird has common sense as well as genius—uncommon combination! I used to think him foolhardy to flaunt himself in the face of small boys with “nigger-shooters” as he does, not to speak of target rifles, but much sitting on telephone and telegraph wires has given him outside information concerning laws to protect song birds.

A mocking bird used to live on our place in Texas, that would imitate the postman’s whistle and bring me out in haste each morning to get the mail. As I would stand wondering at the empty street, that bird would swoop down in front of me and chortle, “Oho! Fooled you again, didn’t I? Silly!”

As Mose was spading up the flower bed around the corner of the porch this morning, I heard him talking to the mocking bird that sat balancing himself on a spray of rose vine near his nest, and mimicking every note that came from Mose’s whistling throat. Finally Mose stopped whistling to extemporize to the bird.

Marse mocking bird, you sho' am prissy,
Mockin' me dat way!
Huccome you gwine be so sassy?
Ain' you skeered, I say?
Wid one finger I could mash ye
An' yo' song away.

Mighty proud you look, a-prancin'
Kinder sorter sly;
What dat tu'key-trot you dancin'?
Hopping 'bout so high?
Sho' kin see de mischief glancin'
Ez you cock yo' eye.

Listen now, you's lack de blue jay,
Scoldin' des as mad,
Yaa-a-a! Yaa-a-a! What's dat you say?
Hit sound powerful bad.
Has you been to torment Friday
Lack dey says you had?

Pot-rack! Pot-rack! now you's mocking
Dat ol' guinea hen.
Now you's lack a chicken squawkin',—
Say, do dat agin!
Hi, dar, puppies, stop yo' talkin'—
Listen ef you kin!

You am lack a whole pufformance
Better'n minstrel show,
Combination song an' coon dance,
Bestest thing I know.
Leavin', honey? Dis our las' chance?
Does you hab to go?

The birds about the place are fond of the bird bath which stands in a sunny place beside the nasturtium bed. Some one or other is almost always there, ruffling his feathers fastidiously, tasting the water to see if it is of the proper temperature, dipping his bill into the basin, and tilting his head back luxuriously to let the water run down his throat. If we human beings had to drink in the manner required of a bird, we should find it inconvenient and be extremely awkward about it, but the birds don't seem to mind in the least. When a bird has splashed about to his content, he flies off to sit on some topmost bough in the sun to dry his feathers, like a woman drying her hair. Sometimes whole families come to take a community bath, spluttering sociably together in a charming fashion.

The gazing-globe is another piece of outdoor furniture that is attractive to the birds, though not primarily established for them. Birds are unable to understand the nature and utility of this big ball of water that is not ice—how could there be ice in the summer time?—and anyway this isn't cold!—and that stands forever without melting on a pedestal in the sun. They fly around over it, light on it, and gravely consider their reflections in

its polished mirror. They trip over it from side to side, and then around the base of it, trying to find those other birds that move but make no sound. They examine the reflections of the lake, the trees, the grass, the clouds, and the bright colors of the flowers, then fly away as if mystified.

There is a catbird that is more persistent in his curiosity than the others. He comes back repeatedly, joggling his tail like a pancake turner, and running over the globe. He grows enraged over his inability to understand the thing and utters passionate cries, jerking his tail in temper. He pecks furiously at the bird that so insults him, the evasive bunch of feathers that is securely hidden somewhere,—but where? I have never seen bafflement so plainly expressed as in the attitude of that catbird on the globe. If that bird were human and capable of doing research work, he could make remarkable contributions to science, for he never gives up. If he had the power of speech, he could enlighten us on many other subjects he has investigated, less elusive than that matter of the gazing-globe.

A red cardinal flashes through the leafage occasionally, like a flaming thought, and leaves me rejoicing in such miracle of color, as in that of the

salamander. How lovely to know that nature has a few creatures as bright as if the whole joyousness of the world were complete in them:

With a red flare of wings the wild cardinal flings
His bright breast 'gainst the air.
In a quiver of light he upstarts from my sight,
And is lost to me where
The pale, ash-colored evening melts into the far,
Spherèd heaven where blooms the first star.

Oh, the day, ere he came like a wildering flame,
Was so somber and still!
But that swift flash of wings a strange ecstasy brings
All my being to thrill.
It was so I knew wings of the spirit, and flame
Of wild dreams, a dull day when *you* came!

At dusk, before the last light of day is fading, and when the stars are just beginning to show, but before the fireflies shimmer in the grass, the bats may be seen stealing out on soundless wings, circling the open spaces above the lawn. I have always felt a sympathy with a bat, because he is different from other birds in being shunned and feared. People loathe him as they do reptiles, and yet why? Other birds are loved for their song or plumage; the eagle is respected, and even the homely buzzard is grudgingly conceded to be useful in disposing of

nature's garbage. But the bat is forlorn, so the poor thing has to slip out in the dark, and fly about, making no noise. He has the manner of a stepchild or of a poor relation.

The screech owl is another bird that is regarded with popular disfavor but that I admire. I think that the cry of the screech owl is one of the sweetest, most musical sounds in nature. Its mournful, eerie voice in the night, when all else is still, is uncanny, I admit, with its traditional presaging of death, yet it is beautiful in its cadences. The negroes believe that the screech owl foretells death to some member of a household when it cries near the home. You know it isn't true—your reason quite convinces you on that point, yet you cannot help believing the superstition when you hear the mysterious tremulo at midnight. You wonder whose summons it is now, and you shudder as you put the pillows over your ears to shut out the sound.

My mother used to tell us of an incident in the life of her mother, who was lying alone in her room one night, with a baby only a few days old beside her. She was watching the play of flames in the big open fireplace, when she heard the cry of a screech owl, and saw the bird fly down the chim-

ney, pick up in its claws a live coal from the hearth, and disappear up the chimney. When others came into the room and heard of the incident, they laughed at her for a dreamer. But the next evening one of the negro slaves about the plantation shot a screech owl that was crying on the roof of the house, and when he picked up the bird, he found that its claws were burnt to a crisp. The baby died the next day.

Women seem to have a natural fear of the screech owl, and make no concealment of it. A woman living near here is agitated whenever she hears one, so that it has come to be a jest among her friends. Recently some joker sent her a dead owl, which was thrown on to the sideboard after her husband had frightened her with it. The next morning the cook, thinking it a game bird the husband had brought home to eat, served it to him for his breakfast. He is now the one who stirs squeamishly when he hears a screech owl crying.

A gray crane lived in solitude about the lake for some days recently, flying lonesomely over the water, or standing with pensive foot on some reed-encircled log near the shore. I wonder what agonies of loneliness a bird or animal must feel to

think himself for a time the only one of his family in the world. The craving for human affection that tame birds and animals show is pathetic, as evidencing their sense of need for something outside themselves. Or maybe that crane has been suffering from excess of society, and has deliberately sought a lake where he could be by himself for awhile. Cranes are noncommittal, as are some human beings, so that one doesn't know whether to sympathize with or congratulate them. One wouldn't like, for instance, to commiserate an old bachelor, when he is congratulating himself on being untrammelled.

The gray crane flew away after awhile, and I saw him no more. I missed him at first, but presently I was to have a thrill greater than any he ever gave me. One morning as I was sitting on the porch, looking out toward the lake, I saw through the vista of open space down the hill, a flock of large white birds, white herons flying from the direction of the river. They circled majestically over the tops of the pine trees, flew in graceful lines of formation over the water, and settled down on the low limbs of an oak near the edge of the lake. Snatching my field glasses, I ran down the hill and across the road, to see them better.

They were so lovely! There were seven of them, —enchanted sisters I felt sure, bound by some spell, whom I might awaken if only I knew the magic word. But I didn't!

I watched them most of that morning, as they flitted over the sedge grass and cat-tails by the edge of the water, or swept above the lake, or lingered on the little island in the middle of the water. They would smooth their white feathers, preening their graceful necks, and gaze at their reflections in the water.

These beautiful visitants remained about the lake for almost a week. Each morning I would rush out to see if they were still there, and would creep round the bank to get a better view of them, lurking behind a clump of shrubs to snapshot them. But the click of the kodak always alarmed them, so that they were up in an instant and off across the water.

They left in the night, I suppose, because one morning when I came out, they were gone, and I have not seen them since. I wonder by what waters they are flitting now, whose eyes rejoicing with their beauty?

Sometimes I see a slow-circling hawk winging its way far above me. If the mother hen spies

him, she calls her chicks frantically, giving a hen siren to intimate that the Zeppelin is about. The gardener, Mose, gets his rifle and takes a shot at it, but never hits it.

Occasionally a clumsy turkey buzzard, ugly as a gargoyle, balances himself on some far fence, his ragged wings flapping awkwardly, his horny head held to one side, as if sniffing for carrion. A buzzard is an anomaly among birds, which even a pronounced bird-lover finds hard to be fond of.

I love to sit as still as possible here and listen to the bird sounds all about. Birdcalls melt into other sounds of nature and of the stir of life about us, almost indistinguishably, yet if I listen for them, and seek to separate them from other noises, I have a pure delight. There is music in every bird note, no matter how awkward and ill-natured the bird may be. That crow sitting on the fence and complaining at the scarecrow in the field has a musical intonation. The vociferations of the jay bird are harmonious when listened to appreciatively, and the blackbirds' family quarrel has sweet concord for me. I love to hear the redbird calling her mate, in a clear imperative whistle, that is answered from the top of yonder

pine where her husband is sunning himself. A little ash-gray soul comes from the thicket to answer the call of "Phoebe! Phoebe!" as she rejoins her disconsolate mate. There is a little bird that calls softly, "*Whisht! Whisht!*" but I cannot find out who it is—not that it matters, however, since it is restful not to know the name of everything, and a birdcall sounds as sweet without classification as with it.

The catbird attitudinizes on the rustic seat, looking up to give his summoning cry from time to time. From a near-by tree I can hear a woodpecker's repetend thrum and see a redhead flashing to and fro. From far-off fields come the antiphonal calls of the quails. "Bobwhite! Bobwhite! All right! All right!" The call of the quail is soothingly monotonous. I recall with special pleasure visits that I used to make to a great plantation near here, where my room looked over a vast field of wheat, with quails in it that woke me in the early morning. I would steal to the window to hear them and to see the waving grain that reminded me of my own prairies with their rippling grass.

The wrens sing about their work, and the song sparrows send their soft melodious songs into the

silences. The hen clucks to her brood with varied intonations. Someone recently tried an experiment with a chicken, keeping it in a room where canaries were. She affirmed that the chick tried to sing and had a musical note unlike that of any ordinary chick. Why shouldn't that experiment be tried on a wide scale, I wonder? But then one might ask himself the question as to why chickens in the country, here for instance, that constantly hear birds sing, never try it themselves. But the matter is interesting material for investigation, anyhow.

I wonder if the birds listen to us human beings as we do to them, and try to understand our language. Do they ever translate our remarks into bird lingo? Do they try to interpret our motions and emotions as we do theirs? Fancy wrens putting into bird dialect the conversation of a porch full of women, for instance!

There are some bird songs so soft and far away that I can hardly hear them with the naked ear, but they blend into the general harmony. In the country there are only pleasant sounds, while in the city there are noises. The friction of human life seems always to produce noise and dirt, while that of nature alone is clean and harmonious. And

even man-made noises in the country, as the sawing of wood, the whir of the lawn mower, the swish of the scythe, are pleasant to hear, while the city's hoarse discordances tire the ear of body and spirit.

I am impressed with the marvelous reticence of nature, so soothing after human inquisitiveness! Birds and flowers and trees never have the vice of confidencing, and chipmunks and toads never try to worm your secrets from you. Perhaps it is because nature publishes no newspapers or magazines, and writes no books. That lizard never really lets you into the secret of his soul, and that bat maintains a self-respecting silence concerning his family affairs. Yon flying squirrel may have horrible skeletons in his tree closet, but he never brings out so much as a bone to bore you with. Those wrens, though they be housemates of yours, and talkative as they are, have the artful grace of entertaining without telling their secrets. Perhaps it is because they have no hair to let down at night. Then is when women reveal things to their later annoyance. That, I think, is the reason why—if indeed it be so!—men are less confiding than women. Shaving is less favorable for conversation, and the fear lest lather get into the mouth must keep many secrets safe.

I have always envied those blest creatures in fairy tales who had the gift of understanding the language of birds and beasts, but I wonder if the artful things didn't fool them after all. What do the birds and animals think of us human beings? Perhaps they understand us better than we do them, and doubtless it is more comfortable for us not to know what is their opinion of us. But they could teach us wisdom on many points, if only we'd learn of them.

The sanity and repose of nature is in contrast to our mental states. Did any one ever hear of a turtle's having nervous prostration, or an angle-worm's going insane? A bullfrog takes mud baths, but not for his nerves, and a cricket never suffers from melancholia. Most of our human ills could be cured if we'd study nature on a country porch, instead of going to hospitals in cities.

I love to study bird's nests more than any human habitation. They are so pathetically frail, and yet so delicately and cunningly contrived to shield the tiny occupant from wind and rain! A bird's nest that has fallen to the ground after a storm has power to touch me to tears. It seems a living thing itself, that must have suffered and been afraid in the darkness and gale.

even man-made noises in the country, as the sawing of wood, the whir of the lawn mower, the swish of the scythe, are pleasant to hear, while the city's hoarse discordances tire the ear of body and spirit.

I am impressed with the marvelous reticence of nature, so soothing after human inquisitiveness! Birds and flowers and trees never have the vice of confidencing, and chipmunks and toads never try to worm your secrets from you. Perhaps it is because nature publishes no newspapers or magazines, and writes no books. That lizard never really lets you into the secret of his soul, and that bat maintains a self-respecting silence concerning his family affairs. Yon flying squirrel may have horrible skeletons in his tree closet, but he never brings out so much as a bone to bore you with. Those wrens, though they be housemates of yours, and talkative as they are, have the artful grace of entertaining without telling their secrets. Perhaps it is because they have no hair to let down at night. Then is when women reveal things to their later annoyance. That, I think, is the reason why—if indeed it be so!—men are less confiding than women. Shaving is less favorable for conversation, and the fear lest lather get into the mouth must keep many secrets safe.

I have always envied those blest creatures in fairy tales who had the gift of understanding the language of birds and beasts, but I wonder if the artful things didn't fool them after all. What do the birds and animals think of us human beings? Perhaps they understand us better than we do them, and doubtless it is more comfortable for us not to know what is their opinion of us. But they could teach us wisdom on many points, if only we'd learn of them.

The sanity and repose of nature is in contrast to our mental states. Did any one ever hear of a turtle's having nervous prostration, or an angle-worm's going insane? A bullfrog takes mud baths, but not for his nerves, and a cricket never suffers from melancholia. Most of our human ills could be cured if we'd study nature on a country porch, instead of going to hospitals in cities.

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The song sparrow builds near the ground, while the wren seeks protection of some human house. The mocking bird has a home anywhere, in a tree or in a tangle of rose vine. A mocking bird has a nest in the Cherokee rose vine here, where it is secure in the thorn-guarded recesses and sings impudently about it to cats and whoever may hear. A crow's nest has a casual slatternliness about it in contrast to the finical ways of more dainty birds. A crow merely throws a few sticks together and calls it a nest, apparently careless as to whether the babies fall out or not, and indifferent to the hardness of the bed. I saw one the other day, made of sticks and grass, with five speckled eggs in it.

A boy brought me a wood peewee's nest the other day, a little elongated, pensile thing, a delicate structure of moss and wood fiber and wool from the sheep's backs, a fairy home. Once in California I saw in the shade of an arc light on the street, a Baltimore oriole's nest. When the light was on, one could see the mother bird sitting on her nest with her head tucked under wing, fast asleep, or else with her eyes wide open to see what was going on. She was indifferent to the glare of the light and to the gaze of the passer-

by. An interesting example of light housekeeping, that!

I saw the other day a wonderful bird house that an inmate of the state farm near by had made. It is an elaborate structure, with cupolas, with porches all around the house, and with various floors. In the different rooms different sorts of birds make their home, so that it is like a city apartment. I don't think I care for the birds to imitate our crowded habits of living, and think it would be more sensible if human beings imitated nests—though when the wild winds blow, the houses are safer, I admit. I should like to live in a tree myself, on a little platform with a roof overhead. But after all, a porch with trees beside it is more habitable, on the whole. I am afraid I should find a nest a bit crowded—I being less adaptable than a bird.

V

BOTANIZING FROM A COUNTRY PORCH

ONE of the joys of porching is that things come to you. Persons who go out into the world to seek adventure or knowledge, who turn life over in the attempt to make things happen, to discover how they work, are victims of their own misguided energy. They would get ahead much faster if they would stand still. Loafing is an art few mortals know how to recapture. Animals know it, and children, and college students, but hardly anyone past his diplomage. The fevered impulse of the time drives one to be doing something—not constructive tasks necessarily, but anything to keep the mind and body from resting. Persons who would scorn useful work of any kind, give themselves brain fag by arduous efforts at entertainment. They seem to think that if they allowed themselves one moment for reposeful thought, some emptiness within would drive them mad. Death is the first opportunity for loafing

that some mortals allow themselves—and they'd dodge that if they could.

As for myself, I've determined that I shall get rested before I die so that I may be fresh for whatever adventure offers itself on the other side. Illogically, I always prefer to rest at the wrong times—dearly loving, for example, to loaf on Monday morning when shrewish duties cry out upon me for accomplishment. I joy in dawdling over my breakfast and the morning paper while laundry shrieks to be counted, and other housewifely tasks assail in vain my Southern conscience. I'm glad I'm not a New Englander!

After all, loafing is the really important object in life. I love to lie abed till late o'clock, and if I tell myself at times, "You should get up," myself tells me, "Why so?" Suppose I get up and work an hour and earn money—what could I buy with that sum "one half so precious" as the leisure I should barter for it?

I once heard of an idiot boy, physically strong enough for work, but steadfast in his refusal to engage in it. When asked to perform any task, he would smile a crafty smile, and say, "What's the use?" I think that boy was wise beyond his fellows, and his intelligent question might well be

projected into many a discussion. We fash ourselves doing many things we'd leave undone, if we asked ourselves, "What's the use?"

But as I was saying, the person who waits reposefully on life gets what he wishes and has the joy of loafing thrown in as *lagniappe*. Now I delight to botanize, though—or perhaps because—I am comfortably ignorant of the subject. (Ignorance is as soothing as a down pillow and is my refuge in many an emergency.) Yet plodding about through wet grass on the trail of truant flowers and elusive weeds is arduous, and on the whole unprofitable. I prefer the fatigueless sport of sitting still and botanizing with the eye and a pair of good field-glasses. What I can't see in one day will to-morrow be brought to my porch by some assistful friend more agile of foot than am I. I take a chuckleful delight in seeing how the world serves a lazy person—as if pleblian energy paid tribute to aristocracy of ease. If someone in my hearing mentions plant or flower that is unknown to me, all I need do is to murmur longingly, "How I'd love to see that! Do you know where it grows?" Next day it will be laid on my couch with explanatory comment, and I can give all my mental force to admiring it, whereas if I had

trudged on tired feet to find it, I should probably be cross and disappointed on seeing it. I also take pleasure in not knowing the technical names of growing things, since the unfamiliar plant, like the song of an unknown bird, has a special charm for my unerudite ear.

Porch gardening is delightful, for one digs only with speculative gaze, and gathers the harvest of beauty without toil of hands. Gardens-in-law are enjoyable, since one may take pleasure in them without responsibility for wielding the spade, or even directing hired hands.

As I lie restfully on this quiet porch, I watch the days swing by, recorded in this calendared garden before me. I may even tell the time of day and count the hours by the morning-glories, the moon-flowers, the four-o'clocks, and such methodical, regular-habited blossoms. I can note the flowers close their eyes in sleep—as the daisies for instance, and open gayly in the morning with dew-washed little faces. The sweet-scented days go by as a dream-pageant, and the cloaked and hooded evenings are a masque of shadows, each like to the others, yet with its subtle difference of delight. I know not which is most beautiful, the June riot of roses and of daisy-snowed fields, the loveliness

of Queen Anne's lace in midsummer, or the Midas miracle of goldenrod in the autumn. Which is most to be admired, the masculine serenity and strength of a pine tree, or the feminine grace of a vine that tactfully covers up barrenness and ugliness, or the childlike appeal in the face of a wild flower?

I have always felt a sneaking fellowship with Ahaz, who, as the Bible tells us, burnt incense in high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree. It was idolatrous, hence reprehensible, of course, but I don't hold it against him, for I burn incense in my heart under every green tree. Such benignant beauty stirs in me a rapturous worship, for trees seem to me the most majestic of all growing things in nature and the most abiding. Grass and flowers are lovely, but they fade and pass, while a tree is permanent, more so than man. Trees last while generations of men live their ephemeral lives and are for gotten. Down in Mexico is a living tree, the oldest in the world, a giant cypress that was centuries old when Christ underwent His Passion beneath the olive trees in the garden. That tree has lived through eras of which man's record is but dim and doubtful, yet to-day it stands, and will

outlive the lives of generations after we are gone.

Yet despite man's pettiness and nature's majestic permanence, despite the fact that man is but a midge that frets about a mighty tree, he has the power to destroy its life. How incomprehensible! We human beings hew down trees that we may use their fiber to print our trifling books upon, but what volumes are worth the trees destroyed to print them? Is not the rustle of green, living leaves in the forest more to be desired than the dry flutter of bleached leaves in a book, covered with black letters like fidgeting flies? Think of slaying happy trees to publish congressional reports, for instance, or doctorate dissertations that count the commas in some forgotten manuscripts, or learned altercations over dead philosophies! Think how clean-hearted, pure-fibered trees must feel over being stained with erotic stories, at being corrupted by garbage journalism! There should be laws passed to prevent such cruelty to trees, such witless barter of beauty for dust and ashes.

I think trees do not mind being hewn down to make homes for men and women to live in, places to shelter little children, but they must wave their arms in unavailing protest in the night when they

think of being made the pages for man's unclean imaginings and cynic sneers. I often think of Joyce Kilmer's lines,

Poetry's made by fools like me,
But only God could make a tree!

I lie for hours at a time, watching the pine trees, with their green everlastingness, their dignity of permanence in a world of change. What do they think of as they stand there, their roots searching the secrets of the earth, their tops touched with sunlight? They watch the white clouds form and change in the blue heavens; they know the passing of migrant birds that rest for awhile in their branches; they share in the loves of home-keeping birds that build their homes in safety in those green fastnesses. The squirrels, gray ones and red, chase each other chattering through the branches all day, and flying squirrels make their darting leaps to safety in those arms. The pine trees are indulgent to all the young life about them, as if they knew how brief the playtime is.

On the slope of the hill and across the road are cedars, richly green. As I look at them, I think of Algernon Blackwood's account of the cedar,

in *The Man Whom the Trees Loved*, as being more friendly to man than any other, protecting him against sinister forest forces. The hill is covered with trees, tulip poplars that lately were gay with lovely blossoms; chestnuts that had their gorgeous blooms that have faded now; holly trees with their bright, thorny leaves; oaks of various kinds, and many others.

The big oak by the porch is full of constant interest for me. Tree toads live in its hollows, and flying squirrels play about its branches, making daring efforts to leap into the bird nests to pillage. The lizards run up and down its gray, gnarled trunk. From the hickory trees out in the open, the green nuts are falling to the ground, startling the grass with their suddenness of descent. Great copper beeches stretch their limbs, green now, but lately glowing with a wonderful shimmering coppery shade. I can never forget the glory of the copper beeches one springtime in Oxford!

In the open sunlight are mimosa or acacia trees, with their leaves whose delicate tracery is like that of ferns, and whose pink blossoms are like the pompons of the sensitive plant, delicately soft and perfumed. In the full sunlight magnolias are

blooming. Surely a magnolia in blossom is the most beautiful tree in the world! The leaves, wide and long, are as glossy as exquisite enameling in their rich green. The blossoms, opening to the sun, great perfumed whitenesses with jasmine delicacy and sweetness, are like flowers seen in some happy dream. A magnolia blossom is like moonlight taking flower-shape. The petals are so sensitive that one alien touch will turn them dark, defacing their beauty. As the flower fades, the petals drop one by one, leaving the golden heart bare.

Magnolia leaves will remain green for a long time, even when they are picked from the tree, and after they turn brown, they keep their shape indefinitely. While the leaf is fresh, one may write on it with a sharp twig or instrument and the writing stands out plainly even when the leaf is brown and dead. I saw a wreath of magnolia leaves laid on Shakespeare's tomb on his birthday once, with messages of reverence from some admirer in the South, our South, where the magnolias grow. How Shakespeare would have loved a magnolia tree!

As I look at these trees about me, I feel that the Greeks were right in thinking that the trees had

spirits, in visioning a beautiful maiden in the heart of each forest miracle. I look for dryad flutterings, but in vain. I hear faint, elfin chuckles in the woods, but glimpse no fleeing shapes. What presences are round me that I cannot hear or see? The bodiless wind allures me; the mist lies over the lake, touching the forms of the trees to a fainter, more shadowy grace, but I cannot tell if it be *only* mist or the floating of some filmy drapery. A little white butterfly drifts up as if it would tell me what I wish, but it is so shy it flits away again before my dulled senses grasp its thought. The pine trees murmur in another language than my own, and I do not know the meaning of that sweet, prelusory call from the topmost branch of the elm tree beside the driveway. There are times when nature shuts us out from her secrecies however much we long to know.

Even so, what majesties are trees! In cities we have only houses and people, poor substitutes for trees and birds! Trees have souls, I am sure, and whoso harms them willfully will come into a judgment for his deeds. I am impressed by Alice Brown's story of the German soldiers in hell, who are tortured by the ghosts of trees they slew in France and Belgium. How the trees must have

suffered in the war! Think of the agony of a tree helpless to protect the nestlings trusted to its care, powerless to shield the dryad spirit sheltering in its heart! Dante should be here to devise a deeper depth of hell for those who murder trees!

The porches here are covered in with vines of various sorts, that make a bowered privacy in places, yet leave a clear view of the hill and the lake and the road. There are rose vines along the columns, Maréchal Niels with their golden loveliness, and climbing American beauties, that a little earlier were a mass of delight, and white climbers, and pink ones. On a back porch an old-fashioned yellow rose of humble origin is allowed to clamber, with its unassuming flowers and its faint odor.

Yellow roses, quaint and shy,
All a-riot on the high
Trellised wall, I mind how I
Loved you in my childhood days,
Loved you for your errant grace,
For each fragile-petaled face,
For your faint, elusive scent's
Delicate impermanence.

There be flowers far more fair;
Other roses, rich and rare,
Others choose,—what do I care?

Yellow roses on the wall,
Still you hold my heart in thrall.
Sight and scent of you up-call
Memory's dim, delicious pain.
Lo, I am a child again!

Beside the driveway is a tangle of Cherokee roses, where the mocking birds nest, while over the wire of the tennis courts white and purple clematis bloom.

On one side of the porch a star jasmine climbs up the trellis, with its clusters of tiny stars, a white perfumed constellation, with the sweetest odor in the world. The star jasmine is to me one of the best-loved flowers, yet it brings back poignant memories. I never smell its fragrance that I do not think of a night long ago one May, when my father lay dying, when from the open window came the odor of the star jasmine on the wall outside. Why is it that odors have more power to recall memories than have sight or touch or sound?

On the trellis on the opposite wall, on the other side of the porch, yellow jasmine is growing, a wild vine that my mother loved best of all flowers, one that grew in the woods of her girlhood. It has little golden bells that shake in the breeze and emit soundless perfume sweet as dreams. When

it grows wild in its native state, it fills the woods with sweetness.

Along the front of the porch scarlet sage is standing, in bright independence, with dusty miller as a foil. All day long the humming birds are poising to sip the sweetness from these honeyed tiny pitchers, their whirring wings making monotonous harmony and their little quivering cries stabbing the silence.

Along the stone wall at the crest of the hill nasturtiums are blooming, with their bright impressionism against a background of soft green shrubs called summer cedars. The hill is white with snowballs, and pink and lavender with hydrangeas, while against the western wall of the house forest lilies are blooming, graceful, swaying in the wind in tawny tints.

In the back is an old-fashioned garden with grandmotherly flowers, phlox, zinnias, prince's feather, sweet William, clove pinks, and the like. Along the fence grow sweet peas and tall, gay-faced hollyhocks, with ruffled dresses, and sunflowers, round and bright. Here, too, are the herbs, sweet basil, lavender, mint, and the rest. There is lemon verbena whose dried leaves hold summer fragrance all through the winter, and

mint that goes in iced tea and lemonade. "Tithes of mint and anise and cummin," ah, that were tribute worth while!

Yonder is a far hedge of crêpe myrtle, whose rose-colored blossoms are like young girls' party dresses, soft, and bright like a young girl's dreams. Across their vivid beauty a bluebird flashes occasionally, like a swift stroke of an artist's brush. White and purple altheas are blooming on the other side of the garden, nodding to each other and to me, as the wind blows.

Over the fence of the vegetable garden in the rear, wild blackberry vines trail and climb. Walt Whitman says a wild blackberry vine is beautiful enough to adorn the court of heaven, which may be true, but in my opinion, that vine will never get there. It is like some beautiful human beings that I know, temperamentally unsuited to celestialty. Still, I admire the blackberry vine more than I do human clingers and climbers. I love to go blackberrying in the woodsy places about here, though I have difficulty in avoiding entangling alliances with the runners. The other day I picked a gallon of berries in the woods in one morning, of which I made jam. Some of my berries were wild raspberries, but they didn't injure the jam, I'm sure.

Did you ever make blackberry jam of berries you have picked right in the woods yourself? It's a delectable experience, and then, in addition, you have the jam. There is a proprietary flavor to berries you've gathered yourself that no alien crop or "boughten berries" can afford, though I was unable to explain matters to Aunt Mandy, who generously wished to add to my gallon a quantity of berries she had got from a couple of small boys at the kitchen door. I wished to keep my jam from the least taint of commerciality, so I cooked it promptly myself.

Jam gives out such a delicious odor when it is boiling, and it is such fun to taste it occasionally, cooling some in a saucer, to see if it is done! I made constant experiments, partly because I wished to keep the jam from burning and partly because—I liked the taste. You must put a silver fork or spoon in the jar before you pour in the hot jam, to keep the glass from cracking, and seal the jar quickly while it is boiling hot.

Thomas Jefferson Randolph goes with me when I berry, looking much like a ripe blackberry himself. He knows where all the thickest growths of berry vines are, and gives me much untechnical information concerning birds and plants. My

attention cannot be devoted exclusively to blackberries, when there are snakes to be dodged, bird nests to be peered into, wild flowers to be gathered, and pickaninnies to be fraternized with. Critical members of the household sometimes make comments on the empty spaces in my buckets when I return from berrying, but I explain that I have brought back much else that may not be made into pies for them to eat, or even into jam—but is mysteriously preserved for my own private delectation in the winter.

I asked Lucia and the Professor to go with me one morning, but they didn't pick as many berries as even T. J. R. and I did. Lucia was jumpy over the thought of snakes, and the Professor picked more green berries than he did ripe ones, for how can one pick the right kind when he is looking at a girl instead of at the vine? People usually do look at Lucia when she is around, but, to my mind, plump blackberries "smilin' on de vine" are more attractive than two eyes, however large and dusky, a mouth that has a wistful little curve to it, and dark hair that waves softly away from a rather eager, serious young face. But then, the Professor is near-sighted, which perhaps is why he looks so long at Lucia, wishing to be sure of what her

features are, so that he will recognize them the next time.

There are many creeping things of beauty in the Virginia woods and country lanes, and in the fields. No bareness is visible, no ugliness but is covered with viny grace. Over many a bank the wild honeysuckle spreads, and many a homely fence is mantled with its loveliness of green and its little perfumed bugles. There is the white, shading into yellow, and there is also the coral honeysuckle, with a bright bloom. When the honeysuckle is in its first glory of blossoms, the woods and lanes are filled with fragrance.

The wild morning-glory climbs up every corn-stalk in the field, lifting innumerable blossoms like bright sunbonneted heads of children, pink and blue and lavender. Over the stumps of trees fallen to the axe, or up into the boughs of those dead as they stand, the trumpet-vine clings and clambers, turning decay into indomitable beauty. Every fence post, every telegraph or telephone pole, is thus glorified with the brilliant trumpets that send a challenge of loveliness in the face of the world, comforting with tribute of love the thing that in some yesterday was a green, living tree.

There are wild roses everywhere in the early summer, pink petaled allurements with a sweeter charm than any hothouse product can possess. There's the wild potato vine, with its great white blossoms like moonflowers, on vines like trailing sweet-potato plants. Wild grape vines festoon the fences or climb into the indulgent tree tops, while the Virginia creeper aspires to the tops of the tall pines. There's a little vine here that I have never seen elsewhere than in Virginia—the cigar-plant, so called because of its blossoms, long and round and shaped like toy cigars, with flaming tips. The foliage is like that of the cypress vine, very delicate and graceful.

As I sit here on the porch and use my field glasses, I can distinguish many varieties of wild flowers by the roadside and fringing the lake. In the wet, marshy ground by the water, the joe-pye weed stands, with its dark lavender sprays of bloom, or in handsome stalks sometimes six or eight feet high. The ironweed beside it has a color something like it, but more rusty and subdued in tone. There is the sumach with its wine-dark spikes and rich foliage by the road. The open spaces that early in June were white with large-eyed daisies, and pink with wild roses, now show the goldenrod

shining in the sun. The goldenrod loves the sunlight and reflects it.

The big white flowers of the wild cotton plant are in bloom beside the road, stately and tall. A blue field that I see in the distance is a mass of chicory, with its blossoms like cornflowers, bravely blue. I have seen many a vacant field and some city lots here filled with it. People who have lived here for years tell me that the chicory is a newcomer here, that it was not seen even fifteen years ago. They say that it is crowding out the daisies, but I don't notice any lack of daisies in their time.

As Mose came back from taking the cow to pasture this morning he brought me a handful of wild flowers, picked with short stems. Why do men always pick flowers with such stubby stems? Mose stood beside me as I ran over the names, to give me information I might need.

There was a spray of jewelweed, with its pendent lovely flowers like lavallières. There was cassia, with its foliage like that of a sensitive plant, and its leguminous flowers, that grow in such abundance by the wayside.

"This cassia is lovely, Mose," I remarked.

"Naw'm, dat ain't casher," Mose smiled. "Dat's

Bob White Pea. Some folks calls hit Partridge Pea, but I ain't never heerd it called casher."

"That's what a botanist told me it was, but I think Bob White Pea is much prettier," I answered. "And what is this leaf?"

"Dat's skunk cabbage," he informed me.

"Here is Queen Anne's lace," I cried, holding up a spray of cobweb texture. "I do think it's the prettiest wild flower that grows, except the buffalo clover, in Texas. You should see a field of buffalo clover, or 'blue bonnet' in a Texas spring, with its heavenly blue color just touched with white and scarlet! But this is lovely, too."

"Yas'm, hit is pretty," he said, turning his old hat around on one forefinger. "But us colored folks calls hit wild carrot."

"And here's the butterfly-weed," I exclaimed in delight, lifting a cluster of rich burnt-orange flowers.

Mose chuckled. "You sho' is got fancy names fo' deshere weeds! Dat's jes' old-fashioned chigger-plant. Dey calls hit dat because de chiggers stays on hit so much."

"Other folks call it butterfly-weed because the butterflies cluster round it to get its sweetness," I argued. But Mose shook his head.

"Here's the trumpet vine," I continued, gloating over the rich red bugles of bloom. "I'm so glad you brought me this. I love it."

"Yas'm," Mose called back as he departed towards the garden. "Only dat ain't de right name fo' hit. Us colored folks calls hit cow-itch."

Uninterrupted by contradiction, I examined the other treasures Mose had brought me. There was a stalk of pepper grass, tall, sprangly with slender branches and tiny pungent pods. I munched it delightedly, remembering how I used to love it in my childhood. And now I love it, not for its own sake, but because that child was fond of it. My canary used to love it, too. There was a spray of wild fern in the bunch, and I could close my eyes and see the dim woods, moist and untrampled, with wild ferns growing everywhere.

After awhile the Professor came up the hill, bringing me an armful of Queen Anne's lace for the big bowl on the porch, and a wee bird-nest that he had found in the grass beneath a tree by the path. I held the cluster of Queen Anne's lace up to the light and looked at its exquisiteness. It is like a snowflake seen through a microscope, with its unimaginable delicacy of form, so fragile it seems that a breath would destroy it, yet lasting through

wind and rain and sun by the road for days. It is like fairy-filagree, like lace the Little People make out of moonbeams for their queen to wear. Here on the same stem grows a cup-shaped green thing called a bird-nest. When I see a spray of Queen Anne's lace, I think of all the lanes round about where I go on my morning horseback rides, and see the abundance of its beauty. It loves the open places where the sun shines freely. Usually it is white, but sometimes I find blossoms that are delicate green, and sometimes a pinkish lavender, but it is always exquisite in its fragility.

As I ride along the country roads and study the wild flowers, I am impressed by the prevalence of two colors, yellow and purple. There is much yellow, of all shades imaginable. The golden-rod, which begins to bloom in July, is everywhere, showing in many varieties that give me unceasing pleasure. There are sunflowers growing in fence corners and along the roads, some giant in size, others mere babies, with all sizes in between. Cassia is abundant. There is blackeyed Susan, with all her country cousins of different features and tints of complexion, but showing a family resemblance. There's the wild snapdragon with its yellow flowers. The butterfly-weed is rich orange

and yellow, with butterflies of its own color flitting above it.

There are many flowers in purple and lavender shades, as well, some which I know, and some of which I am ignorant. There's joe-pye weed, splendid in its stateliness beside the swampy places, and milkweed in its purple-red, with its juicy leaves that exude a milky substance when they're broken. The butterfly pea with its lavender bloom, clinging close to the ground, and the desmodium with its diaphanous beauty veiling the spaces in the woods are more retiring. The purple thistle grows jauntily in the fields, and there are many others that I cannot identify.

I have been trying to think what the world would be like were there no flowers in it. Dismal as the city streets are, they are yet brightened by an occasional display in a florist's window, or by the blossoms in some flower-venders' baskets, which nourish the anæmic soul with beauty. But suppose there were no flowers anywhere, how dreadful it would be! I dare say nature's economic scheme might have been arranged to do without flowers, but life deprived of them would be of appalling barrenness. Cotton, for instance, might have been grown from roots, instead

of seeds, but the lovely hibiscus-like blooms add a grace to the utilitarian field that language cannot measure. Those petals of pinkness so softly touched with pearl, those tip-tilted blossoms a-glisten with dew, last only a day, but life is inestimably richer for them. Each rosy flower asway in the sun, each blossoming vine that touches with grace man's clumsy workmanship, adds something finer than monetary value to the world. A spray of mignonette can bring back holiest associations, and there's a gospel in each wayside flowering weed.

Walking in the city is lonesome because there are no flowers growing by the way. You see no live thing except dogs that look either snobbish or humiliated because of their muzzles, and people who are not *folksy* as in the country. In the country, every road is friendly with foliage and flowers, and each little bypath is like a confidential chat. A rabbit runs across the road in front of you, a turtle waddles along, the birds salute you from every tree, and the squirrels chatter at you, while the flowers nod silently to you on every hand. People that pass you speak to you, even if they never saw you before. But if you try speaking to strangers in the city, you're liable to be arrested. It's the flowers that make all the difference!

VI

A SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

A PORCH has a hospitable soul. It welcomes guests of all degrees in a more cordial manner than the inside of a house ever knows. A porch comes halfway to meet a guest, with outstretched hands, and bids him a lingering good-by when he must go. A shy young man once told me that he never made calls except in summer when his friends were sitting out on their verandas, and he could drop in on them as if unpremeditatedly, because he was ill at ease in other people's houses. Parlors gave him a social chill.

It is true that to ring a strepitant doorbell or clang a brazen knocker, then stand in waiting till a door is grudgingly opened, takes the first pleasure out of a call. To pass one's card to a hostile servitor, or confide one's name to a supercilious telephone operator, is to suffer an indignity disproportionate to the joy of the visit. Door-men in the city seem to me as a class paranoiacs with

delusions of grandeur, yet for all that, we are under their power.

But to stroll past the house of a friend, to see him sitting at leisure on his porch, obviously unemployed, is a different matter. One knows then that a chance call will not inconvenience him. On the contrary, if he is not visibly porching, he may be in the bathtub, or spanking his small boy, or engaged in some other activity which he'd dislike to have interrupted. And it robs a visit of all spontaneity and joy to arrange it beforehand and feel oneself bound to it, when the host may be violently wishing himself elsewhere. Calling has fallen into decay in cities, because there are no verandas. Friendship is largely dependent upon porches.

It is much easier to entertain a person on a porch than elsewhere. If his thoughts stutter, the impediment in his conversation is mitigated by the things he sees about him. He may notice the translucent bodies of the humming birds as they poise above the scarlet sage, or see the mauve-blue shadows on the hill slope, or hear the polyphonic murmur of the wind among the pine tops, or be startled by the importunate yelping of young puppies smitten with some transitory pang. Who could be dumb

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when a baby rabbit lopes up and halts to wash its face with its paws, in plain view by the hydrangeas? Who could be bored or boresome when blue-tailed lizards whisk under his feet and flash across the porch to lick up flies with lightning tongues? It is only inside houses that time seems long and guests are dull.

The outside air gives a fresh fillip to the brain, and lubricates the tongue without the disagreeable complications of alcoholic intoxication. And of course, as anybody knows, proposals should be made on porches in the moonlight,—when there's just enough moon to turn the heart but not to touch the brain,—and with some colored person in the distance twanging a guitar as he sings some old love song. There should preferably be a feathery vine of some sort on the bright side of the porch, to guarantee the proper delicate nuances and innuendoes of moonlight. Marriages made in heaven are all arranged for on porches in the moonlight. Who wishes to propose or be proposed to under an arc light or beside an electrolier and in front of a gas log? Parlors are the real reason for the decline in matrimony and the increase in divorce. How easy to quarrel in a room with a shrewish victrola! How simple to be

amiable in the cool moonlit silences! Decidedly, there should be more porches, provided by the government, if necessary.

I fancy porch chairs remember the persons who sit in them, and when they are alone at night rock with pride or protest at recalling what has been said. I've heard them doing so—when they thought us all asleep! Some night I shall slip down and eavesdrop. No doubt they talk delightfully until dawn, after the fashion of John Charteris in *Beyond Life*, uttering wise and gay reflections upon life. Maybe those chairs continue conversations from where they were broken off, endlessly rocking in the listening night.

I love to listen to conversation untrammelled by responsibility for joining in. That is more possible on a porch than in a house in the glaring light. If there are several persons on the porch, all tonguelessly inclined, I can indulge myself in comfortable silence. I can enjoy the conversation, note its steady stream, and stand aside, or dabble my feet in it as I like, without plunging into the full current. Talk is everlastingly interesting to me,—if it makes itself, and is not the mechanical duty conversation that one produces under compulsion. I like even stupid talk on a porch. I

wonder who was the extraordinary person that invented talk. How clever of him or her—I wager it was a her!—who first discovered that the little pointed organ in the mouth could be used to convey ideas to an outsider! Philologists say that man was differentiated from the anthropoid apes only by the development of language, and conversely, I dare say, if we were all stricken dumb, we should slide back into baboonism. Now, however, we know how to put our talk on paper and send it far distances. And isn't the pen merely an elongated, more pointed, metal tongue? So perhaps we are safe, after all.

As I was saying when I interrupted myself, I like to tilt one ear toward conversation in which I am not required to join. For example, the other day, several women were on the porch discussing husbands. They were guardedly speaking in general, but when a woman discusses husbands in the collective, you may know she's speaking about her own, past, present, future, or hoped-for. Hypothetical husbands are like lightning-rods, conveying the excess electricity in the atmosphere to safe common ground.

"How like a husband!" Mrs. Little had said in comment on some incident.

"Husbands are such foreigners!" said Mrs. Allison, the brown-eyed, brown-haired girl who had lately come up as a bride from Louisiana. "When you're married, you think you know the farthest corners of their minds, and then you keep on discovering that you don't know them at all, that you are continually apart in sympathy. The marriage certificate isn't always a naturalization paper."

"And the discouraging thing is that you never will know them," said Mrs. Phillips, who had recently celebrated her silver wedding.

"That's the chief comfort to my mind," broke in Mrs. Adams, briskly. "What you don't know won't bother you."

"They're more than foreigners,—they're enemy aliens," put in Mrs. Simpson, who had just got a divorce on the ground of incompatibility. "They're always trying to overturn our emotions, and set fire to our peace of mind. We think at first we can't live without them, and then we find it's impossible to live with them."

"The worst part of it is that they're spies!" said Mrs. Winthrop, one of the most pampered wives in Virginia. "They're continually finding out our faults—oh, we have them, of course, else

why should we be attractive enough for our husbands to marry us?—and blaming them on women in general. ‘How like a woman!’ they say. They’re so personally impersonal. Women aren’t like that.”

“‘How like a husband!’” I murmured in belated echo, but I was unheeded,—at least my sarcasm fell unnoted.

“Yes, isn’t it?” agreed Mrs. Simpson.

“Men cease to be folks when they become husbands,” complained the brown-eyed bride.

“Oh, I think you’re all wrong,” put in Mrs. Denton. “Husbands are *ourselves*. We stand shoulder to shoulder against the world. We’re like Siamese twins, and it’s as foolish to make cutting remarks about your husband as to hack at your arm or slice off your ear.”

“I always did pity those Siamese creatures—deformities, nothing else!” snapped Mrs. Simpson.

Just here, I heard Tish, busy at her ironing on the back porch, singing one of her “ballets” that seemed to me to have a bearing on the subject, so I signalled the women to listen to Tish’s contribution of opinion.

“When boys fust go acourtin’,
Dey dress up so fine.
To fool all de pore gals
Is all dat dey design.
Go tittlin’ an’ tattlin’
An’ tellin’ dem lies
To keep up de pore gals
Till dey’s ready to die.

When gals fust get married,
Deir pleasures is done,
But deir grief an’ deir sorrows
Is scarcely begun.
Deir chillun to bawl,
Deir husban’s to scold,
An’ den deir pretty faces
Gits withered an’ old.

Oh, when I was single
I libed at my ease,
But now I am married,
I got a husban’ to please!
I’m washin’ my chillun
An’ puttin’ dem to bed,
Wid my husban’ a-scoldin’ me
An’ wishin’ I was dead!”

“That’s more like the situation,” said Mrs. Winthrop. “And anyhow, Mrs. Denton, you speak so blithely because you’ve been married a very little time. It’s quite evident your spouse

hasn't yet scolded you for overdrawing your bank account."

"The first time mine did that, I told him if he'd take care to keep plenty of money on deposit for me, I'd never overdraw it," said Mrs. Adam.

"There, I see my husband coming for me in the car," interrupted the bride. "I must be ready when he comes, because he hates being kept waiting. He says that's his chief criticism of women, that they have *no* sense of the value of time."

Even one husband, I find, is sufficient to break up any discussion of marriage.

"There are no model husbands any more, as there aren't any more good servants," sighed Mrs. Phillips.

"Yes, I know one," broke in Mrs. Denton. "Professor Hopkins is the only specimen of model husband now existing in captivity. He married a domestic science teacher, but he has to get up and cook breakfast for her and her mother, who lives with them. I'm told he serves a tray to each of them in bed before he dashes off to his eight o'clock lecture."

"Well, I'd be a man or a mouse, one!" exclaimed Mrs. Little.

But the husband was at the steps by now, so the conversation was abandoned.

On another day, I heard an elderly woman giving advice to a young widow swathed in crêpe.

"Now, Sara Jane, I want to tell you that you're doing a silly thing to give away your best clothes just because your husband has died. Don't you do it! You keep those clothes a while, and you'll be surprised to see how soon they'll look attractive to you again. I know what I'm talking about, for haven't I been married five times and been a widow four?"

"But I don't feel *ri-ight* in anything but black!" sniffled the widow into the folds of an inkish-bordered kerchief.

"Those feelings will soon pass. The first time my husband died I put on the longest and crêpiest veil I could find, and I bent myself almost double to the ground in weeping. I couldn't find clothes black enough or heavy enough to suit me—me, who'd been the gayest girl in two counties! My mother was wise, because she said to me, 'The cow that bawls loudest for her calf is soonest comforted.' Well, I'm here to tell you it's so."

"*I'll* never be comforted!"

"Yes, you will, too! Well, my family carried

me to White Sulphur Springs for the summer, to improve my health and distract my mind. Pretty soon I quit crying long enough to see other girls not any younger than I was and not half as pretty and come-hithery as I was before my crêpe days, dressed in their light dresses and having such a good time with the young men. There I was, muffled to my eyes in crêpe!"

"Surely you didn't want to *flirt* at such a time!" came reproachful accents from the veil.

"Sure I did! The catechism says what man's first duty is, but forgets to mention woman's, which is to flirt. How else is man to be kept in proper subjection?"

"Well, I looked around for something to lighten my grief, and I didn't have a thing. I'd given away all my white dresses and my girly clothes, and there I was, with nothing but crêpe to flaunt in the face of all those good-looking young men. But I will say for myself that I could always do more with crêpe than some folks could with pink ball-dresses. Well, I made up my mind right then and there that the next time my husband died I'd keep my head and my clothes. And I did."

"But crêpe is a state of mind—crêpe is symbolic faithfulness to your true love."

"Symbolic fiddlesticks! If you wear crêpe too long it goes to your brain. You see some women here in the South that seem ashamed to take off their mourning even to go to bed, when they'd faint with horror if they thought their worthless husbands stood any chance to come alive again. I shouldn't be surprised if some of them don't wear black nighties, or crêpe-bordered pajamas. Crêpe is hideous looking and any woman who wears it a day longer than she naturally has to is taking her second chances in her own hand, I tell you. You'd better listen to inspired words from one who has been there and knows."

"Will—you go shopping with me to-morrow?" asked the widow.

The other afternoon a group of men and women were here. The Doctor and Lucia had just come in from seeing a country patient. She had a little new local color in the shape of a few golden freckles on her nose, though her eyes were less lustrous than usual. Lucia's eyes seem to fade or brighten with her feelings and serve me as a sort of barometer of her emotions. The Doctor was as blithe as usual, going through a sort of mental attitudinizing for the benefit of observers, chiefly Lucia. His emotional gymnastic don't move me any more,

because I feel they're only verbal trapeze performances.

Carl Hackett was here, too. He's just written a book, an orgy of words. Carl Hackett thinks himself a wild person, but in action he is very conventional. He dissipates only with his intellect. He's one of those mind-proud persons, a bookster, a sort of verbal publisher's dummy, a walking blurb, full of sound and fury, but signifying nothing. He doesn't really injure the *mentale* of any reader, though he'd be deeply grieved if he knew how harmless he is.

This afternoon he was affecting brave indifference under a heavy barrage from the eyes of several girls still in their teens. Carl himself is approaching thirty. I even saw a flicker of interest in the face of Miss Green, a spinster of the sore and yellow type, who is retreating from forty, but reluctantly and with backward-gazing eyes.

"I've been telling Miss Lucia she should write books," said Carl.

"Oh, I couldn't do that," protested Lucia. "I think too much of my thoughts for that. Thoughts are such delicate things, coming up from nowhere, and vanishing like wraiths while you gaze at them. They flit past you like joyous birds, like painted

butterflies. Shall I kill them with pins to put them between the covers of a book? No—I'd rather let them go forever wild and free!"

Carl said, "I sometimes think I must stop writing because books are so revealing. You can't write a page without putting yourself into it. People will see your inner soul."

"That would be embarrassing for some people," murmured the Doctor under his breath. "But you should have the cowardice of your convictions."

"I don't think all books represent the author," said the Professor. "Sometimes a book only shows what the author thinks he is. Books are like children. A child should be his parent's better self, his embodied graces of soul and body, lacking the qualities that mar him—his visible angel, as it were, sent forth to the world to represent him. Sometimes it seems as if this were really true, and again I have known instances where the opposite appeared to be the case."

"Yes!" I murmured.

"Likewise, it seems to me a book *should* be a writer's real self, his envolumed heart, his permanently bound impulses of love and beauty and goodness. Yet as there are spoiled and wayward children, so there are books that misrepresent the

writers, that disgust us when they come into our homes, that upset our mental furniture, that smirch our thoughts and rouse all our antagonism. Books that cannot conduct themselves properly should be shut up in dark libraries till they learn how to behave. Maybe they are atavistic outbreaks, and interpret past generations of the writers."

"Some people don't realize life at all, and hence cannot interpret it," I suggested. "They see life only as a dream, and a dream mirrored on print paper is rather obscured."

Carl said something that I didn't hear plainly, because my mind had started on a little side-trip of its own. So I left the thistle-down laughter of the young girls to the ears of Carl, for whom it was intended. My mind likes to go galumphing over creation, and I find that the time I can best spare for such excursions is when callers are on the porch. My brain is the sort that positively will not stand hitched long at a time, and the hobbles of duty conversation are so irksome that they are quickly kicked off, and my fancy goes galloping over many a flower-strewn plain. I have a profound pity for such people as keep their minds in stalls all the time, that never let them know the

delight of wide, unreined racing. Some people there are, too, I dare say, who haven't minds of their own to ride on, and so they have to hire somebody else's jitney brains to take an airing in. Jitneys are useful, but they have grave limitations. They cannot soar to meet the stars, they cannot plunge into the ocean-depths, but must travel in fixed paths, at so much a trip.

When children are here with other guests, I usually wander off to the far end of the porch with them, to show them my pet hornets, or to watch the tree lizards, or to play with the puppies. I love to hear children talk. A little girl was here the other day, telling me of her Sunday-school. She and her small brother described the services of the primary class, where they have certain solemn observances, such as placing all the feet to match a certain line on the carpet, and singing in concert, "Oh, little feet be careful!" They told me of the birthday offering, the deposit in the collection box of pennies to the number of years of the birth-dayed member. One little girl, whether moved by prophetic reticence concerning census returns, or by a desire to withhold part of the contribution for private use, put in only six cents last Sunday.

"And she *knows* she's seven!" was the small boy's disgusted comment.

"Tell me something more about this primary class. It interests me," I suggested.

"Well, th'other Sunday the teacher told us all about Samuel 'n' Eli. Eli was the preacher that stayed at the church an' ran things. His boys was all growed up an' so he adopted a little boy named Samuel to live with him an' wait on him. Eli was awful old an' couldn't get about much, so Samuel waited on him real nice. He did everything for Eli, Samuel did. He ran errands for him, 'n' he washed the dishes, 'n' ran the victrola for Eli when he wanted music, 'n' cranked the automobile, 'n' did everything Eli ast him to!"

A tiny girl who had listened to the conversation reverted to the subject of birthdays, that held more interest for her than temple services.

"I had a birthday last week," she piped in. "What do you think? I went to bed f'ee years old an' I waked up fo'!"

She looked so bewitching as she said this that I could not resist snatching her to me, whereat she snuggled close to me on the couch and asked, "Where's your little girl?"

"I haven't any," I confessed regretfully.

"Haven't got any little girl at all?" she questioned in surprise.

"No. I'm sorry."

"Where's your little boy?"

"I haven't got any little boy, either," I was forced to admit.

She surveyed me pityingly for a moment, then asked, "Well, what have you got?"

I considered, the while I mentally enumerated my blessings.

"Nothing that takes the place of little girls and boys," I said, kissing her yellow curls.

She gave me a quick, whimsical little hug, and was off to chase a puppy round the corner.

The seven-year-old boy remained behind to tell me of a baseball game he had attended, at which a famous pitcher had pitched.

"I certainly do admire that man," he said. "When I see him it makes me feel all wiggly inside of me."

"I understand," I said, nodding.

"Did you ever know anybody that made your heart wiggle?" he asked.

"Yes, heaps of times."

"It's like being scared an' glad all at the same time," he philosophized. "Funny how things

that don't *touch* you can make you feel dif-frent, isn't it? Now, when you're mad, you get kinder hot all over, even if it's a cold day."

He broke off with a giggle. "I saw a girl the other day that sure was good 'n' mad!"

"Tell me about it."

"Well, she's Nancy Riley, that lives next door. She's eight years old, an' she's a hot tamale, she is! Th' other day her mother spanked her for something she'd done, an' I was in our back yard an' heard her yellin', reg'lar war-whoops. Nancy, she sure is some yellor when she's mad."

"What did she do when she stopped yelling?"

"She come out behind the garage where I was, an' she stomped her foot, an' she gritted her teeth, an' she hollered at her mother—but not loud 'nough for her to hear. She said, "I hate you! I stomp on you! I spit on you! I wish you was dead, an' I wish you was buried, an' I wish I was stompin' on your grave!"

"Whew!" I commented.

I recalled what Carl Hackett had said the other day, that children are the only persons that should write books, for they feel most keenly. When we are children we have poignant emotions, but lack language to express them. And when we're older,

we have plenty of words but are bankrupt of emotions. It's like the man who said when he was a small boy he longed for a dollar to buy all the gum-drops he could eat. When he was a man, he had the dollars, but didn't care for gum-drops.

"That was sad, of course," I had commented at the time. "Unless he had learned to care for substitutes."

"I hate substitutes," Sara Crenshaw had broken in. "If I can't have what I want I'd rather go without than take a substitute."

"That's just one of your mental bed-sores," Helen Anderson had put in. "It came from your marketing while the war was on. Anyhow, life is just a series of substitutes, some of them better for us than the things we want."

A boy of five came to see me recently, and talked with me while his mother enjoyed other conversation.

"Don't you jes' nachelly *hate* being bathed?" he questioned me.

"No," I answered, "though at times I regret the time it takes. You haven't really anything to show for it, you know."

"I show the diff'rence," he asserted. "The

worst is ears," he went on. "People gouge so, you see. But mother thought up a game that makes it go easier. We pretend that each ear is a robber cave that we've got to explore. An' cleaning finger-nails was horrid till she got to letting me name each one for some person I'm int'rested in, an' so I stand it a lot better."

"Who are your finger-nails?" I queried.

"President Wilson and Admiral Foch are the thumbs, an' of course they've got to be kep' clean," he informed me.

"Certainly I can see that. And who are the others?"

"There's Papa Joffre, an' Billy Sunday, an' Uncle Remus—he isn't real, you know, but he seems more alive than some folks I know. They're on the right hand, an' the littlest finger is my Sunday-school teacher. I keep her awful clean, because she's so sweet an' pretty."

"And the left?"

"The left—there's Ty Cobb, an' General Pershing, an' Charlie Chaplin."

"And——?"

"The littlest finger there is the little girl that lives across the street." He flushed a bit, but held his head up bravely, then looked down with

tenderness at the small finger—which at that moment was not immaculate.

“That’s delightful,” I commented heartily. “I must remember that scheme when I have anything I dread doing.”

I’m always glad when plain country people come to see us. They have so much real knowledge, “mother wisdom,” not gained second-hand from books, but learned from the earth and the air and the sky. Real contact with the soil has given them earth’s secret knowledge, and they have, too, a quiet humor that is genial, with no sting.

The other day a farmer and his wife dropped in as they were on the way home from town, and they sat upon the porch an hour or so. She told us of the canning and preserving she had done, of the vegetables she had dried, and the jelly she had made, till I was hungry for some of her watermelon rind preserves and her wild grape jelly. Her rusty hands held themselves rather stiffly in her lap, and she said with an apologetic laugh, “It don’t seem natural for me to be havin’ my hands idle. I usually am sewing with a red-hot needle and a burning thread what time I’m resting.

There's so much to be done for folks—poor folks and children, and so on—that I feel like a body ought to be busy all the time."

I felt an impulse to kiss those work-scarred hands, to let tears fall on them, for they seemed beautiful to me.

"You should let other people do things for you, too," I murmured, whereat her husband broke in, "That's what I'm always telling her. She'd disfigure herself or work herself to death for a nigger she never saw before. And she won't buy herself proper clothes, because she thinks other folks need them worse."

"Now, Lemuel, you know I've got a beautiful new dress," she protested.

"Yes, but I had to get it for you!" he threw at her.

Turning to me with a boyish grin, his grizzly moustache twitching delightedly, he explained: "She wouldn't get a new dress, so I picked the goods out for her and bought it without sayin' anything. I took it to a dress carpenter and told her to put a firm foundation under it so it would be solid and substantial. She put in an underpinning of some sort, then she clapboarded it, and shingled it with some whimmydiddly trimmin'.

I gave her orders to put the nails in firm, so's the dress wouldn't warp and come apart. It's a good-looking structure, too," he concluded proudly.

"I'm sure of it!" I said, twinkling my eyes at his wife.

The talk drifted round to a wrong that a neighbor had done the couple, one of their "no-relations that the children call uncle" as the man explained.

"What did you do?" I asked the woman.

"Why, I just forgave him," she answered simply.

"How could you?" someone asked.

She looked past the pine trees to the blue sky a moment before she answered. "Folks talk about forgiving as being a Christian duty that's disagreeable, that most people dodge. I've come to believe that forgivin' folks is a luxury, a real treat that we too often deny ourselves. We hold a grudge sometimes, but if we only sensed it right, there's nothing more satisfying than to forgive somebody. And Mr. Black is a good man. I don't reckon many folks has a chance to forgive as good a man as he is."

After the couple had gone, I sat thinking of what the woman had said. I longed to forgive somebody at that moment, to enjoy the resultant soul-luxury, but I couldn't think of any one to for-

give. I felt vexed for the moment that I hadn't any wrongs to wipe off with a gesture of the soul and I looked forward hopefully to a time when somebody would injure me so that I might forgive him.

Then I thought of the Doctor. I might forgive him for killing Nip! I turned the thought over and round in my mind for a while, and finally decided that nobody deserved to be forgiven for an offense like killing a pet frog, even in accident. What would society come to if people went around forgiving things like that? No, I wouldn't do it!

Mrs. Matthews came in for a little while, and I had her and the porch to myself. Her presence soothes me like a cool hand laid on the forehead, like a draught of water from a mountain spring, like the *Amen* of a prayer that is really a prayer. There's always a look of peace upon her face so that when I see her I realize how nervous and unrepentant most women are.

"And whose woes have you been assuaging now?" I asked.

"Oh, I never *do* anything," she protested. "I only listen. Sometimes I feel that I'm nothing but an ear—an auricular funnel into which people pour their troubles."

"Listening is the rarest grace in the world, dear

lady. Ears are uncommon, but the earth is full of tongues. The reason lots of folks never think is because they're forever talking, yet we should listen twice as much as we talk—for haven't we two ears to one tongue? Other folks get their relief by pouring their woes into your ear. How about you?"

"Oh, I pray about them," she answered simply. "Prayer helps more than anything else."

A musician came to see me the other day, and we had the whole porch to ourselves. After we had talked of various superficialities for a while, I noted an intent look on his face, and he held a listening finger on his lip.

"What is it?" I asked.

"I was trying to analyze the musical sounds in nature, trying to scale the harmonies going on about us."

"Can you do it?"

"No," he said ruefully. "Our musical scale isn't equal to it. We have only tones and half-tones, while nature uses delicate shadings of sounds, fractions of tones we have no way of representing. Our instruments are too crude for the finer harmonies of nature. Listen to that bird-

song now. There's an intricate beauty, a tonal subtlety in those trills that no man-made instrument could give. That little brook as it goes singing over its stones has a rippling melody we can never capture, never give on any mechanism man has made. Listen to the wind among the pine trees! What organ could reëcho those majestic diapasons, those sweeping chords?"

"I'd call them polyphonic prose," I answered. "They make me think of Amy Lowell's *Can Grande's Castle*. I think in terms of poetry, as you do of music. But there's a lovely rhythm in nature that forever eludes man and tantalizes him by its perfection.

"Now, I lie here and try to scan these effects by metrical units. The sound of a galloping horse is pure dactylic. Of course, a bird song has a wild, over-running rhythm that no fixed foot will measure, yet I can frequently find snatches of perfectly regular meters. The whistle of the quail, *Bob White! Bob White!* with its answer, *All right! All right!* is iambic, while the call of the redbird is amphibrachic—sounding like *Receive her! Receive her!* The jay bird speaks in simple spondees, *Jay! jay! jay! jay!* like the crow's spondaic *Caw! caw!*

“The whippoorwill’s cry of *Whip poor Will! Whip poor Will!* is an amphimacer, short in the middle and long on the sides. The phoebe bird sings in trochaics, *Phæbel Phæbel Phæbel*. Sometimes the bird refrains will have acatalectic lines, but sometimes they are perfect in their scansion.”

“Have you worked out the verse forms they are using this season?” he smiled.

“We have much free verse among the birds, too. The birds are fond of the repetend, as of the refrain, and use all sorts of metrical devices. I listen to them and try to fancy what poetic forms they’re using of ours, or if they invent all their own. They’d probably scorn such artificial devices as the triolet, the ballade, and the like, but the sincerer songs, like the sonnet, they must be fond of. But no bird is long-winded enough to attempt an epic, for which I’m glad. The epic is an unnatural form, as is shown by the fact that no woman has written one. At least, I never heard of it if she did.”

After the musician went away, I sat by myself on the porch listening to the sounds about me. I heard a faint murmur of voices, and looked down to the curving stone seat where the hill begins

to slope, to see Lucia and some young man there. I couldn't hear what they were saying, but the murmur sounded like proposal conversation. The chipmunk ran along the wall to complain at me for their intrusion. What right had those young human beings to preempt the nice place in the shade right over his house, to talk of things he wasn't interested in at all? If the color of the masculine head down there had been chestnut, let us say, instead of sleek black, I might have shooed that chipmunk away and told him to let events of importance take their course, instead of interrupting love's exaggerations and sweet fictionings.

But as it was, I said no word to that chipmunk, but only looked approval at his chatter. Why couldn't he scold a little louder? Didn't it ever occur to the stupid little beast that he might leap on a coat shoulder and bite a man's ear? That would bring forth a show of temper that might be disillusioning enough. I wished that I were a chipmunk so that I could try it myself, as any chipmunk should do when the wrong man is proposing to the sweetest girl in the world, right at his front door. Animals are so unimaginative! Now, much as I'd like to, I couldn't bite the Doctor's ear

without causing unfavorable comment, but a chipmunk could do it with impunity.

But he didn't.

A writer from New York, who was passing through this part of the country, came to see me a few days ago. In speaking of books he said, "I had ambitions to be a great writer, and I've missed it."

"You may yet write the books you dreamed of," I suggested.

He shook his head rather forlornly. "No, I'm almost sixty years old, and now the thought of death is ever present with me. I'll go on as I've done for a little while, and then a few years of semi-consciousness, of half-living—and then what? What lies beyond death? The thought tortures me!"

"I think of death as a door," I answered gently. —"We'll just go on living, with a newer, better life. We'll know then the things that elude us now. We'll be wise, without the fret and worry of our brains to learn the truth. We'll be ourselves, but our best selves."

"If I could only know!" he cried.

"We can't know everything," I said. "We must trust, as little children do. The brain can't solve

everything—for some things must be left to the heart.”

“I think that’s the trouble with my life,” he said slowly. “I’ve tried to live by the brain alone, and never by the heart.

“Do you know Robert Wilbur? He’s a cynical poet, a bachelor, but not long ago he said to me, ‘That phrase, “Except ye become as little children, ye cannot enter into the Kingdom,” rings continually in my mind.’”

“We all need to become as little children. True goodness, true greatness, is in being, not in striving. The children are the true sages, and poets and heroes, after all,” I said.

“Yes, children are such magical little creatures, too exquisite for adults to understand, and yet there are some people to whom a child is commonplace.”

He looked out across the lawn to the edge of the road where a barefooted youngster had stopped to play with a puppy. “I think it’s only the old bachelors and the women who’ve never had children that appreciate them,” he said humbly. “I live in New York, and the loneliest thing about that town to me is that I don’t know any children. And I need to know some children! A

child has no distressful thoughts about death, but I——”

“Listen a moment,” I said, motioning toward the cornfield where Mose was singing as he worked.

“Swing low, sweet chariot,
Comin’ for to carry me home!”

Lower the sun was setting. Like a flaming wheel it rested on the edge of the clearing, shining across the open spaces, lighting with glory the pine woods at one side.

“I looked over Jordan, and what did I see?
Coming for to carry me home!
A band of angels comin’ after me,
Comin’ for to carry me home!”

As the myriad corn leaves were stirred by the wind, I heard a rustle as of unseen wings. The sweet, mournful voice sang on, the bent figure swaying to and fro in rhythmic motion with the song. The crude song had a pathos, not personal but racial, expressing the nostalgia perhaps of a homeless people for a home they had never known, symbolic of our longing for “a more continuing city.” The untrained voice had a sweetness that grand opera never had for me, unconscious of

the song's poignant beauty, unaware of any auditor.

"Swing low, sweet chariot,
Comin' for to carry me home!"

Lower the golden wheel sank, still lower, lower still, its golden spokes glimmering through the banners of green. As the dusk came on, the song trailed off into silence, and shouldering his hoe, the black laborer came across the field. The chariot had passed, but its light lingered on our porch.

"Coming for to carry me home," I echoed softly. "*Home!* There'll be little children there, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven!"

"Yes," the man said. And then he went away, without another word.

VII

BACK-PORCH CALLERS

A MORNING on the back porch is a joy to be remembered. There's always something different, something new, to make each day individual; yet the back-porch mornings blend indistinguishably together in a harmony of pleasant peace. Life is all about me there, in its manifold activities, its multitudinous stirrings, yet those hours are as restful as dream-haunted sleep, to be recalled afterward in the unresting stir of the city, as parentheses of peace. The hands may be busy on the back porch, but the mind is rested and the heart at ease.

Sometimes, while we are at breakfast, Mose will come in, his ragged felt hat perched on one pensive finger, and remark, "Dey's corn an' butter beans an' cymblin's dat should be canned to-day ef you doan' wish 'em to spile."

"Oh, can't they wait till to-morrow?" my indolence protests.

He laughs indulgently. "Naw'm, dey's to-matoes dat'll have to be tended to to-morrow."

"Oh, all right!" I capitulate, and move out to the back porch. What use to argue with a gardener whose hat bespeaks such long experience with the soil?

I seat myself upon the second step and wait for the corn. Mose comes up with a great basket full of gay green ears, which he puts down before me.

"What's the name of this corn?" I inquire, with a bucolic air.

"Dey's Country Gentlemen," he answers.

The Country Gentlemen are rather comic figures, with long blond beards and bright green garments, which I strip mercilessly from them. I am without shame.

The hounds discover my presence and come up to be conversed with. The puppies, engaging young creatures with yelping spontaneity of movement and confiding eyes, leap all over me, till I have to cuff them affectionately with an ear of Country Gentlemen. They face the world with all the impudent irresponsibility of extreme youth, with an arrogant optimism, a blithe faith in a well-boned world. But the hounds have a disillusioned air that is touching. Is there any-

thing more mournful than an elderly hound? He seems conscious of the indignity of his looks, with his slat sides, his loose, pendent ears, and his unlovely lines. A grown hound has the most apologetic air, forever beseeching pardon of heaven for being a hound. He will put his nose on your arm with a look in his melancholy eyes that says, "I'm homely and forlorn, and I expect nothing but to be kicked—but love me a little, if you can! I'm lonesome!" Save when the fox is on the run, hounds are futile things, and realize the fact.

These hounds, despite their effacing air, are a deal of trouble on this place. They are likely to break away at frequent times and go gallivanting over the countryside, settling down at some far estate where they are not in the least desired, so that the telephone jingles frantically for Mose to come and bring them home.

Blunder, an old hound that had been given away, but who had wandered away from his new home and suffered all sorts of privations and ill-usage, came home to die not long ago. He was sick and starving and broken-hearted. He dragged his dreadful body about after us, looking at us with the mournfullest eyes in the world. He was so diseased that he could not live, and would

only bring contagion to the other dogs, so we gave him all he wanted to eat, and then someone chloroformed him while he slept. The Man of the House wouldn't stay to see it done, though.

These dogs are ungainly creatures, yet the Man of the House loves them. He sympathizes with the sentiments of a former governor of Texas who was devoted to his dogs, but allowed his boys considerable license, till one day the youngest son kicked one of the puppies. The father promptly castigated the youngster, saying sternly, "Let that teach you a lesson how to treat dogs! Kicking my fine puppy, indeed! And now I come to think of it, you've been disrespectful to your mother lately!"

A hound justifies its existence because it is so affectionate. There's no luxury like being loved. With most persons or creatures, you have to pay the price in being lovable—it's worth it, even so—but a hound doesn't question your deserts. He'll lick your hand without asking for credentials. To have the sincere affection of a hound is worth a million dollars. Now, a bulldog's devotion has a menace in it, but you know a hound won't bite you, even though you richly deserve it. The hound is like some faithful, humble souls that love and

expect no return. A bulldog is a problematic character.

A little pig that has rooted under the boards of its pen comes running up, squealing in glee at his liberty and munches at the corn husks I throw him. I wish I knew the psychoanalysis of a pig. I look at the snub nose, the snoutish face, the slanted forehead, and wonder what emotions are behind all. Of what does the brain behind that retreating brow think in the long, hot days when piggy lies and grunts? If I could know the language of his grunts! Does he have any premonitions, I wonder, that next Christmas this family will be eating home-cured ham and spareribs and backbone? Do those nervous little feet know that presently they'll be pickled?

Likewise do those chicks, those cuddly balls of fluff that blow like white and yellow thistledown about the steps, cheeping and scratching, realize their fate? These little things that clutch at the heart with their helplessness and beauty,—do they foresee the time when they'll be long-legged scrawny fowls and be put ruthlessly into the pot? And what of me? What pot of destiny with its crackling fires is being made ready for me, around the corner of some unconscious to-morrow? But

never mind, this is to-day, and life is fair, so that little Pig, and Chicks, and I are wise to be happy!

I amuse myself with striving to range and arrange the possibilities of pig interest. There is the pig lyrical, the pig metaphorical, the pig epic, the pig dramatic, the pig comic. Doubtless this current pig is unaware of his cosmic and inspirational importance, though, on the other hand, he may, like certain others than pigs, overestimate his relation to the universe. A more learned pigster than I am might trace the subject further. What a character in fiction the pig might be made!—for his dominant traits are pronounced and describable. Then how rich is the local color of the pigsty, how affluent the atmosphere! A practiced pig-stylist would find memorable material for description and exposition, yet the pig has been neglected in literature. For who but Lamb, the inspired, has roasted or toasted him wrapped in the leaves of a book? I love Lamb's letters for their constant thanks for gifts of pig.

Then what animal is more endeared to the heart, more close to memories of home life than the pig? One thinks how happily of Christmases past, when the pig, a triumphant brown, held the

apple of concord in his juicy mouth. Scents of sizzling spare-ribs, of the back-bone of content, of little sausages frying in the pan, have power to transport me to my childhood days. I mind me of a certain country client of my father's, who used to visit us when she came to court, bringing gifts, like the Greeks, but of pig, not of horse. Such sausages, such country-cured ham, such chitterlings!—who in cities knows of chitterlings? And, oh, the crackling bread that our old cook used to make! And chine, and pig's feet, pickled! My tongue rolls blissfully at the remembrance of all these piggish delicacies of the past.

It is the pig that is really the forbidden fruit, for too much of him makes a mortal long to be as the gods,—witness the Germans of yesterday. Kultur has its factual basis in over-much sausage.

Another memory of my childhood is connected more dramatically with a pig. We had, when I was extremely small, a *pig libre*. Its feet were unrestrained, and it intrigued me with its curly tail, so that life's one pursuit was to catch that tail and see if I could pull the curl out. Upon such trivial motives are great passions based! I had no such entrancing curls,—so why should a spotted pig *état* a few months, while I was all of three years old?

One day, one never to-be forgotten day, I caught the tail and careered wildly and joyously around the yard behind it and the pig. Life's great adventure realized, life's inquisitiveness satisfied! The curl did come out! But the pig was unable to understand the purely scientific spirit of my research. He had not the anthropomorphic mind, hence couldn't fathom why I wished to entail such inconvenience upon him. But why these needless details?

He ran faster, and so did I. I couldn't let go, and neither could he, though we were at one in the desire to be separated. He dashed under the edge of a low building, I straight behind, until a nail, sticking out, struck me in the forehead. Then I let go. A little angular scar in the edge of my hair remains with me till now as a memento of my interest in pigs, the mark of pig upon my brow.

Then there is the pig lyrical. True, I've never *seen* a pig soaring above the empyrean clouds, but that's no proof that he doesn't do so when people aren't looking at him. Perhaps that's what he's up to when he square-roots his way out of the pen and is gone for hours at a time, necessitating much loss of time on the part of Mose. Or perchance he lyricizes at night. Perhaps the

fairies lean over the bars of his pen and woo him enchantingly in the moonlight. Why not, pray, if Titania was in love with an ass's head?

Nor have I heard any number of soulful songs about pigs, but my musical education is by no means complete. A man I knew in Oxford used to chant when he was feeling happy,

“When we are married we’ll have sausages for tea,
When we are married we’ll have sausages for tea,
When we are married we’ll have sausages for tea,
Tum-ti-tum-ti-tum!”

Now, I’m not sure that he ever had sausages for tea, but evidently the idea represented two states of perfect bliss for him: matrimony, and sausages.

Then there is the pig dramatic. What ‘scapes, what chase, what struggles, what pursuits have I known in connection with those few pigs in yon pen! What complications of pursuing trousers with barbed-wire fences and blackberry vines! What colorful language issuing visibly from the lips of Mose! The household is plunged in gloom when the pigs get loose, and women wander helplessly from window to window to see the return. What impels those pigs to break away from their perfectly happy home, where they are

swilled thrice daily, and where a whole family leans over the rails to gloat over each apparent extra pound of flesh? Do they wish a wider landscape, or just escape? Do they wish to go somewhere, or just away? If I could but understand a pig, I should know more about my own impulses and motivations.

There is also the pig metaphoric, who has appeared often in literature, though not always with a porcine terminology. There are many human pigs, not confined in sties, that are on the whole less admirable than their penned brothers. The pig symbolic has left his hoof-marks on many a printed page, without being aware of the fact.

In the pasture near by the horses run and graze. The mother neighs solicitously after her little bow-legged colt on its preposterously long legs, looking like a small boy on stilts. Why do children never walk on stilts any more, I wonder? When I was extremely small, stilts were the height of fashion among children, small boys, and tomboys but now they are no more. Stilt-walking is an entrancing sport, and gives one a sense of supreme power. I loved it. I wonder what mental and moral stilts I use now, without knowing of them?

Mose comes back with more corn, and brings

me a mole he has caught in the trap in the vegetable garden. Did you ever see a mole close at hand? It is a lovely little thing, with the softest fur in the world, softer than sealskin, and of a wonderful slate gray, almost blue, so fine and lustrous. Digger the Mole looks like a tiny pig, with its snout. It has no eyes, because it doesn't need any in the dark ground. Its feet are of a curious paddle-shape, much larger in front than in the back, with five toes. It seems strange that such a beautiful animal should arouse the harsh feelings it does in the breast of kindly Mose. How does the mole fend for itself, with no eyes and no ears? Does it merely feel the vibrations in the ground, as Helen Keller does? Is there some special wireless scheme for moles and earthworms? Mose brought me a field mouse, too, that he had captured, a dainty creature, with its fur soft and gray, but not so delicate as that of the mole. It has cunning little ears, and delicate feet with four toes. Mose says it lives in the cornfield and destroys a deal of grain of one kind and another, but I think we can well spare enough for him.

The old cat who lives in the barn comes up, bringing her kittens in her mouth, one at a time, and lays them down on the step beside me. She

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knows she will not be allowed to keep them at the house permanently but she wishes perhaps to give them the advantages of travel and cultural society even for a time. I am glad of their presence, though they do make a muss. I have as high respect for this mother cat as for any human being I know. She is an unhandsome beast, brindled and rusty of coat, with unmanicured nails and a generally unkempt appearance. She used to belong to a country neighbor, who gave her to us on my earnest solicitation. The reason for my admiration for her is this. A year ago the other barn in which she was then living, with another batch of kittens, no more beauteous nor high-pedigreed than these, caught fire. The mother chanced to be away at the starting of the conflagration, and arrived on the scene only in time to see her home ablaze, with shouting negroes wildly pouring buckets of water and verbal abuse on the fire.

What must have been the emotions of that mother cat, as she saw her house burning, and remembered her kittens? She made a dash for the door, when some negro, always kindly to animals as colored people are, attempted to head her off, not knowing her motive. She escaped his clutch,

scratching him viciously as she did so, and dashed into the burning barn and up the stairs. She reappeared with a kitten in her mouth, put it down in a safe place outside, and leaped again into the fire. She made that trip four times, bringing her babies safely out, without a singe on one of them, but being badly burned herself. And they were only very ordinary little barn cats, at that! It's most extraordinary what a mother will do! But, as I said, I cherish that cat.

Aunt Mandy, who has come out to sweep up the porch, is minded to broom the cats away, but I restrain her.

"Let them stay here, Aunt Mandy. I like society while I'm working with my hands, though I require solitude when I work my brain. Which shows, I think, that brain work is unnatural."

"Humph!" is all she says.

The porch is so littered with kittens and Country Gentlemen that she has hardly any free space to sweep. She makes a few futile strokes, then leans loquaciously on the broom. Aunt Mandy is different from me, in that society hinders her work, and conversation endlessly prolongs her task. Yet I have noticed no tendency on her part to refrain from talk. A colored person is more constantly

vocal than a white. If Aunt Mandy isn't talking, she is singing, and if you don't hear her doing one or the other, you may know she's huffed over something, so you'd better keep out from under her feet for the time being.

After a time Aunt Mandy swept the porch to the tune of *Peter, Go Ring Dem Bells*, one of my favorites among her hymns.

"Well, I heard a mighty rumbling, it was way up in de clouds.

It was nothin' but Master Noah, he was readin' of de laws.

CHORUS:

Oh, shout de glory, glory in my soul!

We'll shout an' sing to make de ol' yearth ring.

All join hands an' march to de heabenly King,

Oh, children, 'twon't be long befo' we hear Gabriel's trumpet sound!

Well, Peter, go ring dem bells;

Peter, go ring dem bells;

Peter, go ring dem bells.

I've heard fum heaben to-day!

Well, go away po' sinner, don't you grieve long after me,

Kase I have a heap of trouble tryin' to buy yo' liberty!"

CHORUS:

Mose comes up with a basket of butter-beans and a handful of luscious plums. He caressingly scratches the back of one hound that huddles against him, and murmurs tenderly, "Git erway fum heah, you onery, lazy, wuthless hound, you!"

"Mose, who'se that colored boy going along the road so fast, all dressed up in his Sunday clothes?" I query.

As Mose looks, he laughs secretively. "Dat's Jephtha, Milly's boy. He's gwine to town to have hydrophobia."

"What?"

"Yas'm, dat's hit. Hydrophobia. He has hit ebery time his ma gits paid off."

"Tell me about it!" I demand.

Mose chuckles reminiscently. "Wellum, about-en a yeah ago, dat triffin', no-count nigger got bit by a dog dey said was mad. Tain't hu't him, of co'se, becane nothin' gwine to kill dat nigger. But his ma, she kinder worry bouten hit.

"One day in town, dat shiftless Jephtha hearn somebody say dat a pusson what's bit by a mad dog should take de pasture treatment, or some sich name. Dey say, do', dat hit cost cornsiderable. Well, dat nigger went home to he ma, an' tell her he boun' to hab money fo' dat cure. She say she

ain' kin spare hit, which was de trufe, 'kase hit's all she kin do to buy tobacco an' shu'ts fo' that lazy boy. Wellum, dat boy, he begin to foam at de mouf, an' roll roun' on de flo' an' yell out, 'I got de hydrophoby! I got hydrophoby!' 'twell his ma, she gin him de money in a hurry. He went to town an' blowed hit in on movin' pickshur shows an' ice-cream sodys. An' when he come back home, he say he wus cured fo' de time being, but dat de doctors say de fits was likely to come back at any time. An' den, of co'se, he must take more treatment.

"Wellum, dat boy, he take de fits ebery month come he's ma's pay-day, when Mis' Weaver, whar she cooks for, pays her her wages. Den Jephtha he puts on his best clothes an' goes off to town to enjoy his hydrophobia."

"Why doesn't somebody tell his mother the truth?" I cry indignantly.

"Wellum, dat Jephtha, he's mouty sly, an' nobody roun' heah want's dey barn set on fiah, or dey's best dog pisoned, or nothin' lack dat. Dat boy, he'd do anything."

As Mose ambles off down the hill toward the garden, I watch a hen cross the road in front of an auto. What is there in hen psychology that

makes her think she has urgent business on the other side of the road whenever an auto passes? She will call her chicks after her, and is distracted if they don't mobilize in the center of the road under the very wheels of danger. Perhaps she is merely teaching them a noble scorn of danger, or maybe she thinks she has a few too many of them. Mayhap she suspects that some of them are not her own, but have been changed in shell, and she'll get rid of them in easy fashion. Or perhaps hens, as other creatures, find it difficult to adjust themselves to conditions their ancestors wot not of. Carts, now, and buggies, have been known to chickens for countless feathered generations, hence they may be instinctively avoided, while the auto-complex is new.

The other day an aeroplane passed over the place here, and the fowls and birds were prodigiously upset by the occurrence. The catbird flashed his broad tail indignantly, the chickens flew to cover, the buzzard on a distant fence flapped his ungainly wings inquiringly, and the pigeons circled in the air as if bewildered by the flight of this monstrous, noisy bird, that went so fast to its nest, or else was out seeking what it might devour. I wonder if the birds near

aviation camps, on the contrary, did not learn to treat aeroplanes with disdain? Perhaps the migratory birds will presently arrange to take their spring and autumn passage in flying machines, thus saving time and wing energy.

If the birds and animals only knew how to organize properly, they might have an easier time than they do now, though I dare say it is nicer as it is, for the human world is getting organized to excess. Anyhow, though animals may miss much, they escape more. A rabbit doesn't have to bother about income taxes, as a squirrel is upset by no changes in fashions of fur. The rent problem never troubles a woodchuck, and a polecat doesn't have to ride in a crowded street car, though, if he did, I'm sure the other passengers would allow him plenty of room. Animals are pretty well off, after all, as are colored persons in the country, who show their happy attitude toward life. Optimism seems related in some occult way to pigmentation, for the blacker the skin, the kinkier the hair, of a negro, the more joyous and blithe is he in disposition, the more heedless of any to-morrow. But as the skin is bleached to brown, then white, the *laissez-faire* policy is changed to the motto, "Do it now,

and do it quickly, or the other fellow will do you!"

The animals are wiser, and we should learn of them. We should go to school to the squirrels and the puppies, in the open, rather than be shut up in gloomy halls with spectacled professors, fossils that never were alive.

Thomas Jefferson Randolph is at this minute lying on his back in the shade of an oak tree near by, and singing to himself. He'll never have a doctor's degree, but then his hair will never grow thin, and his eyes lose their brightness by peering at print in musty libraries. Thomas Jefferson Randolph is interested in the things that really count, as one may tell from his song.

"Raccoon up de 'simmon tree,
Possum on de groun'.
Raccoon say to de possum,
'Won't you throw dem 'simmons down?"

CHORUS:

In de mawnin' you shall be free,
In de mawnin' you shall be free,
In de mawnin' you shall be free,
When de good Lawd set you free.

Ol' Brudder Ben an' ol' Sister Luce
Gwine telegraph to ol' terbaccer juice

What a great camp-meetin' gwine to be
When dey ride in de chariot in de mawnin'.

CHORUS:

In de mawnin' you shall be free,
In de mawnin' you shall be free,
In de mawnin' you shall be free,
When de good Lawd sets you free."

Tish comes up, at that moment, from the barn where she has been to hunt eggs. Why do hens persist in leaving the safe and sane nests provided for them by thoughtful friends and going off to secretive corners? Tish has a box in her hands which she lays down excitedly before me. I look inside and see, alas! There are thirteen little dead chickens, forlorn little corpses that had never known really what was life.

"Ah, what was the matter?" I cry in anguish.

"Dat crazy yaller hen, dat I been chasin' fum pillar to pos' to fin' her nest fo' near-bout a month, she done stole her nes' in the hin' corner ob de loft in de barn, whar nobody ain' hardly ever go. De ol' huzzy! She mought 'a' knowed dat dem baby chicks couldn't hop outen a high box lack dis-here is! An' she ain' kin pick dem out in her mouf lack de ol' cat kin her kittens. Des look dere now,—thutten little chickens dat would 'a'

been fryin' size in de shake ob a dead sheep's tail."

I gaze tearfully at the piteous, wee corpses, thinking what must have been their sufferings of slow starvation, with maybe that idiot hen galivanting off on pleasure trips, leaving the babies to die of neglect. Or maybe she was there beside them clucking grievedly as they died. Maybe she shouldn't be blamed for not having human intelligence. But poor little chicks!

Tish gathers the box up in her apron, resentful of fate. "Look lack dat our chickens heah is jes' nachelly conjured. What wid the hunnered chickens dat Missis had in de incubator, dat she 'lowed to die de day befo' dey hatched, 'case she tunned de little oil lamp up too high; an' de ones in de yudder settin' ob de incubator, whar de blastin' dat dem workmen yonner de hill done kilt, hit do look lack we is bawn to bad luck wid chickens. An' de weasel an' de fox an' de rats ketches mo', outen de henhouse, 'twel hit keep me purty neah deestracted."

But I feel no sympathy with her economic grievances, for my pangs were all for the poor baby chicks. To think how they must have looked forward to getting out of those shells, only

to find themselves in a box they couldn't get out of! Life is incomprehensible and cruel for chicks, sometimes.

I think with regret that perhaps if we had followed the custom of the Mexican peon in having the animals and fowls blessed for the year, such calamities would not happen. Among those simple folk, one of their innumerable saints' days is set apart for a sacred rite connected with the animals. Every peon brings his pigs, his chickens, ducks, geese, donkeys, cows or whatever live stock or feathered property he may possess, to the courtyard of the church, where the priest pronounces upon them a blessing valid for the year. This benediction is supposed to keep away plague, theft and sudden death, though, of course, if an animal should die before the allotted time, no good Mexican would think of holding the priest responsible.

The charm is thought to be more operative if the blessés are freshly washed, combed, and if possible curled and dyed beforehand. Hence, at one of these rituals one may see blue chickens, scarlet geese, orange ducks, burros with rainbow stripes, gay pink dogs, and even purple cows.

The friend in whose home I spent a month in Cuernavaca told me of her experience with the

rite. Her husband is a physician, and one year a grateful patient, living in the mountains, bestowed upon him a lion as a gift of appreciation for some marvelous cure. When the next animal-saint's day rolled round, the peon who had charge of the lion insisted that his protégé must be blessed with the others.

So the cage was rolled on a cart to the courtyard of the church. But the jarring motion must have loosened the door, or else the lion had access of strength because of indignation over the liberties taken with him, for he broke out of his cage in the middle of the ceremony. The benediction was cut short, the congregation scattered widely, painted birds and beasts flying in all directions, and the faith of the peons was rudely shaken. After that the padre made a rule that lions were outside official blessing.

VIII

A LITTLE STUDY IN BLACK AND WHITE

SOME mornings Aunt Mandy searches me out on the front porch with wheedlement like this: "Ef you was minded to string de beans an' shell de peas fo' dinner whilest Tishie finishes de ironin', I mought could spare de time to knock you up a caramel cake dis mawnin'."

"Oh, all right!" I assent, gladly abandoning whatever favored form my lounging may be taking at the time, in favor of Aunt Mandy's famous caramel cake, which is one of my chief joys in life.

"I done set you a rockin'-cheer out on de kitchen po'ch whereby Tishie's got her ironin' bo'd," says Aunt Mandy, and I follow her to the rear.

I move my rocking-chair as far as possible from Tishie's sphere of activity, however, for the charcoal burner on which she "hots" her irons is rather warm for comfort on a summer day. The kitchen porch is an ideal place in which to work, for it is shaded by tall, cool trees, and open to the breeze

from three directions. Besides, it has an unobstructed view of the road, which is the reason why Tishie elects to work here whenever possible, no doubt. We can see all the passers-by, the calicoed and shirt-sleeved negroes, the motorists from town, the horseback riders, and the strollers.

Tishie is a good-looking young mulatress, hence I notice many colored persons like to stop for a drink of water from the well when she is working on the kitchen porch. For instance, Wash Allen, a big, upstanding buck negro, rounds the curve of the hill almost as soon as I take my seat, saying casually, "I'se powerful thirsty."

"He'p yo'self," says Tishie, with a flirt of her red-ribboned head.

Wash drinks slowly from the tin cup taken from beside the pump handle, casting upward eyes at Tishie, who thumps her iron vigorously, pretending to take no notice of him.

Presently he leans on the railing of the porch, to say unctuously, "Seems lack you wu'ckin' mough-ty hard, Miss Tishie. You gwine kill yo'self ef yo' doan quit wu'ckin' so hard. Fust thing you knows, dey'll be singin' at yo' house, an' you won't be hearin' hit."

"Doan reckon dey's any danger ob *you* wu'ckin' you'self to death!" retorts she.

Wash only giggles, otherwise ignoring her snub, which he knows is induced by my presence.

"Shore was some rain we had las' night!" he remarks affably. "Reg'lar gully-washer an' toad-strangler!"

"Where do you work, Wash?" I inquire.

"I wu'cks at Marse Jimmy Parsons, in de white house ober by de Three Chop Road," he says.

"Have they any children?"

"Naw'm, dey ain' got no chillun. Ain' nothin' runnin' round dey house cep'n a fence," he grins.

"Does you like hit dere?" asks Tishie.

"Yas'm, most inginerally I does. But sometimes I gets de worry-blues, an' I reckon I wouldn't be corntented anywhere."

"Huh! don't be such a hen-granny!" sniffs Tishie.

"Miss Tishie, is you gwine wid me to de festible next Sat'day night?" asks Wash.

She gives a flash of her eyelashes at him as she answers, "I mought in case I was *asked*."

"Well, I'se askin' you now," he returns.

"All right."

Wash takes another long draught from the tin

cup, sets his hat on one side of his head, and is off down the hill.

I look down the road presently to see a creaking buggy with a black man, a mulatto woman, and two ginger-cake pickaninnies in it. The man alights from the buggy and starts on foot up the hill toward the house.

"Here's Amsi. I reckon he's comin' to give you howdy," says Tish.

Amsi is a friend of former years, who used to work for the family, an estimable darkey who has recently finished a penitentiary term for murdering his wife. In fact, he was out on parole when he was with us. I once asked him why he killed her, and he seemed reticent as to details, merely mumbling that she "was carryin' on wid anodder nigger."

"Amsi done got married again since las' summer," Tish informs me. "Dat no-count yaller Lily."

By that time Amsi is almost at the porch, his black face shining cordially.

"Howdy, mistis? How you is?"

"I'm well, thank you. I hear you're married."

"Yas'm," he grins. "I got tired o' cookin' mah vittles all de time. Dat's Lily an' de chillun in de buggy now."

"So you married a widow? How long has her husband been dead?" I ask friendlily.

Amsi shuffles his hat. "He ain' ecsackly dead."

"Oh, so she was divorced?"

He shifts his weight to his other foot in embarrassment. "Naw'm, she ain' divo'ced, neither. We ain' never believe in no divo'ces. Dey doan' seem decent to us. Her husban', he ain' ecsackly dead, 'case he ain' never been bawn. She ain' had no husban' befo' me."

"Whose children are those, then?"

"Dey's Lily's chillun. Dem chillun, mistis, is sorter happen chances, you know. Well, I reckon I better be gwine long. Gotter be travelin'."

And the fiercely virtuous Amsi creaks down the road again, with his new family.

Presently after a few discursive thumps with the iron, Tishie pauses for conversation again.

"Dere comes Jubal Jones. I wonder whut he's comin' up heah fo'. To borrow somep'n, ob co'se. Jubal Jones is de borrowin'est pusson I eber seed. He'd borrow de hair off'n yo' haid an' swear he'd put hit back next Chewsdays."

Jubal Jones approaches with a conciliatory step.

"Howdy, mistis. Sho' is a scrumptious mawn-in', ain' hit?"

"Huh!" Tishie grunts to her iron. "Look lack he claimin' de credit fo' producin' de mawnin'!"

"Yes, it's a very nice day," I concede defensively.

He pulls the lobe of one ear with ingratiating fingers.

"I was jes' steddying' bout how to take my ol' woman to church to-morrow. You know dere's a protracted meetin' goin' on ober by de Four Mile Mill, by Tuckahoe Creek."

"Yes?"

"My ol' woman needs religion, an' hits too fur fo' her to walk. Marse Kilpatrick, what Marthy washes fo' his wife, done loaned me his blin' hoss to drive, but I ain' got nothin' to drive hit to." He pauses with insinuation.

"And so?" I query courteously.

"I was a wondering ef you all would lend me de use ob dat ol' buggy you got in de shed, fo' de day. Hit's sorter lack loanin' to de Lawd, you sees."

"Well, yes, I guess so," I consent. "Stop by to-morrow and tell me about the sermon. "This last is intended more to insure return of borrowed property than to evince urgent interest in the protracted meeting.

"Yas'm, I sho' will," he declares vehemently.

"Our pastor, he is a ponderous expounder. He preaches by inspiration an' presperation. He don't hatter study. He ain' kin, in fac', 'case he ain' kin read. Dat sarmon ob his las' Sunday was sho' stirrin'!"

"What was it about?"

"Hit was abouten whited sea-pulchers."

"What is sea-pulchers?" asks Thomas Jefferson Randolph, who has wandered up.

Jubal's chest swells with the pomposity of invited information. "Dey is dem great white birds dat flies atter de ships an' eats de corpses ob de folks what dies at sea. Doan you remember what de Bible says bouten' dem? Dey's full ob rottenness an' dead men's bones? Sea-pulchers is diff'rent fum land-pulchers. De land-pulchers is mo' lack de turkey buzzards."

"I see," I remark, with interest.

"Yas'm, he sho' is one great preacher. He preached a sarmon on cleanness Sunday befo' last. His tex' was 'Wash an' be clean'!"

"Always appropriate," I comment.

"Yas'm," and Jubal goes off toward the garden to speak to Mose.

Presently Mose comes up with a basket of vegetables, wearing a rueful look.

"Dat dere Jubal Jones, he sho' am one borrower!" he complains to the puppy.

"What he git fum you?" queries T. J. R., vivaciously.

"He done borrow ten cents fum me to put in de collection plate to-morrow. He ask fo hit in nickels, so's he could put in one an' his wife de odder. I ain' never heard o' borrowin' fo' de Lawd befo'. Mos' ginerally when folks borrows, hit's de debbil dat gets dey money."

Presently a gay express wagon, with red resplendent wheels and vivid sides, comes up the road to the hill. It is drawn by a horse well gone in years and having none of the shining appearance of the vehicle, a tired, disillusioned horse, with limping foot and hungry sides.

"Dat's Solomon Doolittle, deliverin' yo' white dresses his wife done wash," Tishie tells me.

Solomon Doolittle is of portly size and with a languid grace that a life of ease conveys. He presents the bundle with the air of one conferring a medal of honor.

"Here's yo' dresses, mistis. Dey sho' is done up nice! My Mariny, she sho' am a good washer, as well as a good cooker."

"That's nice," I respond, then fix accusing eye

upon him. "Solomon, you don't feed that horse half enough! And you ought to attend to that lame foot."

"Yas'm, a white lady done stop me on de road yistiddy an' say de society fo' cruelty to animiles will git me ef I doan feed hit mo'. But he ain' a hoss dat shows his feed, lack you know some hosses is dat way."

"All the same, I advise you to feed him and doctor him better," I sternly admonish.

"Yas'm, I'll do dat, ef you thinks best. Hithertofore I ain' ecsackly feed him. I jes' let him browse, but I gwine buy him some oatses ef you sesso."

"I do!" I asseverate emphatically, and Solomon drives off in his glorified cart.

"Dat Solomon Doolittle sho' was well named," says T. J. R.

"You is said hit!" agrees Aunt Mandy, appearing in the kitchen door to view the departing splendor of wheels. "He am de laziest man, black or white, dat was ever bawn in dis county. Ef dey gives gold medals fo' laziness, I think Solomon Doolittle would git de worl' prize."

"Where does he get the money for such a brilliant cart if he doesn't work?" I ask.

"Fum his chillun what dies."

"Do they have property to leave him?"

"Naw'm, suttently dey ain'. Dey's mos'ly babies. But dey has dey lives insured."

"What?"

"Yas'm, hit's lack dis. Solomon Doolittle been livin' in dat ol' tumble-down house ob' his fo' nobody knows how long. Hit set right plum on de groun', an' dat ain't healthy. One o' his chillun tuck cornsumption an' died, an' Solomon, he near 'bout grieved hisself to death be'case he ain' never thought ob insurin' hits life.

"Yas'm, most ob de colored folks roun' heah has dey lives insured, even to de little chillun. Dey is really mo' profitable, yo' know, 'case dey dies oftener. When Solomon Doolittle think about hit, an' when anodder one ob his chillun takes de cornsumption, and is taken down in de baid, he went an' had its life insured. Yas'm, fo' fifty dollars. When de chil' died, he bought him a lawn swing to set in. Yas'm, dat's mostly all he does, you know, sets, an' so he wanted a comf'tble place to set in. His wife, she sports de family by taking' in washin'.

"Wellum, when de chillun kep' dyin', yo' see, Solomon was feelin' right prosperous. Some folks raises cotton fo' a libin', an' some raises hawgs, or

upon him. "Solomon, you don't feed that horse half enough! And you ought to attend to that lame foot."

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"Wellum, when de chillun kep' dyin', yo' see, Solomon was feelin' right prosperous. Some folks raises cotton fo' a libin', an' some raises hawgs, or

cawn. Solomon, he raised chillun. Colored folks has chillun awful easy, yo' know,—tain't no burden to dem lack hit is to white folks, so Solomon was gittin' up in de pictures. He was gittin' rich. But some white ladies must have repo'ted de sarrumstances to de orcifers, 'case 'long come a health orcifer an' tol' Solomon he gotter move his family outen dat onhealthy place. Solomon, he say he ain' kin do dat, 'case dat's de onliest house he got. De orcifer, he say, ef Solomon doan move quick, he gwine put him in de penitentiary fo' murder. Yas'm, fo' murder! So Solomon, he moved.

"He bought dat gorgeoussome wagon wid his last two chillun's money, an' he goes 'round in it to deliber his wife's washin'. Yas'm, hit makes hit kinder hard on her, 'case, yo' see, Solomon 'spects her to do more, since hit's easier fo' him to deliver de wash."

Aunt Mandy closes her monologue and the kitchen door with a bang and retires to her pots and pans. Amidst the rattling resultant I can hear the strains of her song.

"Once dere was a moanin' lady,
An' she libed in a moanin' land.
And she had one onliest daughter,
Snatched by de Lawd's command.

Moan, sinner moan,
Till de good Lawd shall set you free!
Moan, sinner, moan,
Till you come to glo-o-ory!"

Tish and I look again toward the road, where now we can see Elder Burke, the pastor of the negro Methodist Church, going toward town in the "Prince Album" coat that the unmarried women of his congregation have given him. He is a widower of three months' standing, but the widows and near-widows of his flock are not standing.

We can also see Louisiana and Alabama, the twins whom nobody in the county can tell apart. They wave joyous *howdys* to Tishie as they pass, by their gay costumes evidently bound for some pleasure excursion to town.

Presently a champagne-colored boy about twelve years old comes up the hill, with a curious, loping movement like the gait of some woodsy animal that is lazily unafraid. He presents a folded piece of paper to Tishie, and kicks up pebbles with one warty toe, while she reads it.

She smiles with guarded gratification, as she says, "Tell yo' ma I thanks her kindly, an' I'll be proud to come. I'll bring a poun' cake, I reckons."

He turns on one earthy heel and is off, his sus-

penders but ill-supporting his recalcitrant trousers of blue denim, his blouse of indistinguishable color sticking out from his waist line.

"Lucretia's Tave is gwine to be married," Tishie remarks. "Dis is de invite."

"Let me see it," I say.

It is a printed affair, on cheap paper, and reads:

"Tave Crabtree and Alabaster Jones will be married Wensday night at 8 o'clock. You are invited."

Tishie gives me monologic information concerning the character of the coming festivity.

"Yas'm, I done boun' to git a present fo' dis-here weddin', 'case dey doan let nobody in de do' dat ain' got a present. Dat's de ticket ob admission, yo' know. Yas'm, if de present is wuth twenty-five cents, you can hab refreshments sarved to you. Yas'm, yo' got to leab de price tag on de bundle, so's dey kin check up on yo! An' yo' name, so's everybody kin see whut you gibe.

"Yas'm, in co'se some ob dem do try to change de price tickets, to make de present seem more costive dan hit is, but mos' everybody knows what things cost at de five an' ten cent sto', and de twenty-fi' cent sto', which is whar we ginerally gits de gifts.

"Yas'm, ef yo' pays fifty cents fo' yo' present, yo' kin hab two servin's ob refreshments, but it ain' mostly wuth hit. Naw'm, doan many ob dem cost fifty cents. We generally gits usessary things dat de bride an' groom kin use atterward. 'Cose, de things dat you ain' kin use makes de mos' show at weddin's.

"Yas'm, dey has cake an' wine at de weddin'. Yas'm, de guests dey furnishes de refreshments. Yas'm, Virginia is dry now, but dis is home-made wine, made outen blackberries an' sich lack. Some ob de neighbors gibes wine an' some brings cake. Yas'm, weddin's is very nice, but dey is expansive.

"Yas'm, I knows dey is got jus' a little house, jes' two rooms, one upstairs an' one down. Yas'm, dey's moved all de furniture upstairs so's de guests kin hab room to stan' in. De bride's payrents, dey is gibe her a set ob golden oak furniture fo' de bedroom. Yas'm, dat's on exhibition downstairs, wid de res' ob de presents. De bed ain' put up, hit's jes' restin' 'gainst de wall. Yas'm, de neighbors will hab to stay atter de infare supper, to put up de bride's bed. Yas'm, weddin's is pleasant, but dey do eat up yo' arns."

Presently up the road toils a fat girl, of midnight

black. Her breasts resemble the inflated balloons one sees on circus day, and her hips billow as she walks. Her white-toothed smile is a livening thing to see.

"Dat's Queen Victoria," says Tishie. "She's wu'ckin' for Miss Hadley in town now."

"Good-morning, Vic," I say cordially. "How do you happen to have the morning off on Saturday?"

"Wellum," she smiles expansively, "I done tooken hit off to invite mah frien's to mah baptizin' to-morrow. I'm gwine to be baptized."

"Tell me about it," I suggest.

"Wellum, everything's all 'ranged fo' now, cep'n fo' me to remin' mah frien's 'bout hit. I been gittin' ready fo' hit fo' near 'bout three months now. I done got in a lot ob baptizin' presents already. Yas'm, folks, dey gibes yo' presents when yo' is baptized. Dat's whut colored folks is baptized fo', mos' ginerally. Yas'm, I done got fo' pairs ob silk stockin's, an' a breas' pin, an' a bead bag, an' nine hanker-chers, an' two chromios, an' a red silk wais', an' a vanity-box, an' a lookin' glass, an' a lot ob odder things. Yas'm, hit's expansive to be baptized, but yo' gits part ob yo' money back.

"Yas'm, hit is expansive becuse ob de clothes yo' is got to buy. Hit's tooken all mah wages fo' three months to git mah clothes. Yas'm, a pusson has to hab new clothes fum de skin out to be baptized in. Hit wouldn't do at all to go unner de water in yo' ol' clothes.

"Yas'm, you is got to hab three separate suits, all complete fum de skin out. Yas'm, one is fo' to drive to de church in. I gwine drive in a blue suit. I got blue silk stockin's an' blue shoes, an' blue pettiskirt an' all to match. Yas'm, I hires a kerridge to drive to de church in.

"Yas'm, den when I gets to de church, I has to change all mah clothes. Yas'm, dey allus does hit, I doan ecsackly know why. I'll dress in pure white fo' de baptizing. I got white shoes an' stockin's an' all to match. In co'se, do', I doan hab to buy a hat to wear in de water. Dat's one saving.

"Den when I comes outen de water, I got to put on a new suit. I'm gwine to dress in pink den. Den I has to pay fo' de kerridge, yo' know. Yas'm, a baptized pusson allus hires a kerridge fo' de day. You gits hit cheaper by de day, yo' know, 'case de driver, he kin come in an' see you baptized. Yas'm, a pusson goin' to be baptized rides aroun' in it in

de mawnin' to invite her frien's to come to see her baptized. Yas'm, dey knows 'bout hit befo'hand, but dey likes bein' pussonly invited. Yas'm, I'm comin' out heah de day befo', case de jitney charge too much to come out heah in de mawnin'. I come out de street car dis time. But to-morrow, in co'se I couldn't ride on de street car. Hit wouldn't be proper.

"Atter de baptizing I drives 'round all de afternoon. I gwine be baptized 'bout fo' o'clock, yo' know, an' dat leaves a lot ob time befo' sundown to drive in. Yas'm, I know hit takes all yo' wages to be baptized lack dis, but hit sho' am nice to be a lady fo' one whole day. Yas'm, hit's wuth hit."

And Queen Victoria waddles down the hill again, after voluminous thanks for my contribution to her carriage hire.

I decide that, after all, Queen Victoria's philosophy is not half bad. She gets a deal out of her existence, more than many white persons whom I know do. There are persons, Anglo-Saxons, to whom life seems a series of desiccated duties, duties with the substance there, of course, but lacking all juice, all freshness. I'd rather be like Vic.

From the wood-pile comes Mose's voice in song.

"I went to ol' Nappie's house one night;
Ol' Nappie wasn't at home.
But I took mah seat by a pretty yallar gal,
An' I picked upon an ol' jaw-bone.

REFRAIN:

Oh, Susanna, don't you cry fo' me.
I'm jus' fum Alabama, with mah banjo on mah
knee!"

Lucia and the Professor stroll up the hill, from a walk in the woods, and she drops down on the steps by me, while he goes away to town. Tishie has finished her ironing, and starts setting the table for lunch on the side porch. I can hear her singing as she rattles china and silver:

"Ol' Aunt Sukey, what yo' got fo' supper?
Sparrowgrass, chicken-foot, an' not a bit o' butter.
Got any good thing, save it, save it.
Got any good thing, save it twell I come!"

"Lucia, I'm planning for you and the Professor to be married," I say facetiously in earnest.

"Never!" she cries vehemently. "He seems to me like a granite monument covered over with Greek and Sanskrit inscriptions that I can't make out."

"How delightful!" I cry. "I should think that would appeal to your sense of curiosity. Who

wants a husband she can entirely make out, or make over?"

"Yes, but——"

"Those inscriptions are probably nothing more alarming than ancient love poems. And just think what fun it will be deciphering them all the rest of your life!—a word at the breakfast-table some morning, a line on an anniversary, a whole sentence maybe, when you're ill."

"He looks so stern, as if he had such capabilities of displeasure in those eyes. He looks to me like a blue-eyed iceberg!"

"But, you see, you never can tell much about icebergs, because only one seventh of them shows above the water. The other six-sevenths may be melting with tropic emotions for all you know."

"Yes, but I'd *want* to know!"

"The trouble with you, Lucia, is that you've been spoiled. You think that men and colored persons were born into the world to wait on you. You think because a man doesn't give himself rheumatism singing ditties to you in the damp grass at two A.M. that he has no sentiment. At that very moment he's probably punching his pillow trying to think out a plan to make a fortune

or a fame for you, which is better than serenading underneath your window."

Lucia blushes divinely. "You are so absurd! This—person you speak about doesn't care for me at all. He's never said the *least word* about romance."

"He doesn't say anything?" I question closely.

"No! He doesn't say anything, and he doesn't say anything, and he just *keeps on* not saying anything!"

"Well, he may have an impediment in his speech, but his eyes aren't dumb!" I retort. "And any way, Boston men aren't as ready proposers as Virginians. Just give him time enough and he'll tie himself."

"Oh, I don't want him to say anything!" Lucia blushes still more furiously. "Only—only—it seems a little—just the least bit—discourteous, don't you think?—for a man to hang round and be so silent, so long?"

"I like him!" I retort stubbornly.

"Oh, you like everybody!" she accuses in disgust.

"I don't like all people the same!" I defend myself. "I have grades of preference, and he's in Grade A."

"Not with me!" she cries, escaping into the house.

"It isn't time to turn in the final grades yet!" I hurl after her. "There are various tests to come yet."

The old cat, who has brought her kittens again out to visit me, licks them devotedly and looks up at me with eyes full of affection, as if to say, "Aren't they adorable?" The homeliest hound on the place lies down at my feet with a low whine of affection. Love is the rarest thing in the world, but the commonest as well. It is not like genius, or wealth, or fame, or great success, restricted to the few. Anybody can have love abundantly, if he only wishes it.

Just as I decide to move into the house, Milly Andrews comes by to get a drink of water, as she is passing on her way to her home. She stops to talk with me a few moments. Milly's voice is music, every accent a caress, and Milly herself is one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen. She is almost white—almost, but not quite!—with the *almost* that means everything in the South. With only the slightest trace of African blood, she looks like an Italian princess should, with her

mournful dark eyes and the midnight plume of her lustrous, waving hair, with the crimson quiver of her rich lips and the curve of her soft cheeks. Yet Milly is a negress—so considered—who lives in the negro settlement near here and works as a housemaid in town.

While Milly talks with me, her eyes unconsciously arraign the world, and, as she walks away, my eyes follow her down the hill, suffused with angry tears at the thought of Milly's life. And yet what possible solution is there?

MILLY

What wild desires, what tragic dreams are thine!—

What chafing at the fetters of thy fate,

What yearning for the impossible, what hate
Of thy low serfdom in thy dark eyes shine!

That fragile form was never made for toil;

Those slender fingers have an artist's grace,

And the wild, haunting beauty of thy face
Makes every impulse of the heart recoil

From destiny's decree. Thy soul is white!—

And thy false fatherhood hath dowered thee

With Anglo-Saxon brain—yet, tragedy
Has claimed thee for its own, the racial blight!

Must bend thy head to bear the servile yoke,

That proud, dark head, erect in queenly scorn!

For those few drops of black blood thou art born
To live-long shame no power may revoke.

Thou daughter of a race of cavaliers,
Banished forever from thy next of kin,
Must pay the penalty for others' sin,
Must house thee in low negro huts, meet sneers

Of cynic men, must call thy hopes to heel,
And face the slaughter of thy dearest dreams.
While thy white womanhood a lily seems,
'Tis mired by the muck of negroid it reveals!

Ah, what must be thy father's memories
To hear thy lyric voice and know that thou
Art his own shame-born daughter that doth show
The darkling splendor of those mournful eyes?

To see in thine his mother's pure, pale brow,
And the blossomy curve of scarlet, sensitive lips
His young, dead sister's own! What scorpion whips
Of impotent remorse his soul must know!

For his sin, thou the unending shame must bear,
While he, unpunished, in his world walks free—
Thou innocent, yet worse than murderer, he
Has damned thee to a lifetime of despair!

IX

EATING ON THE PORCH

EATING on the porch is more than a mere utilitarian process devised for the renewal of waste tissues. It is a physical delight participated in by all the senses. The eyes feast as well as the palate, the ears drink in intoxicating sounds, and the nose—ah, how that nose does enjoy itself! One eats with all the pores of the skin, with the hair. One eats more than mere food, but devours as well the dew-washed morning, and swallows the banks of honeysuckle like a honey-hungry bee. The joyous birds slip singing down one's throat, one quaffs the lake and the lucid brook at a draught, crumples pine trees as salad, and finishes off with marsh-mallow clouds.

Eating on the porch is a rite beyond the fancy of city folk who bolt their meals and eat only newspapers with them. Printer's ink is bad for the digestion, as any puppy can tell you. The city person is dead when he eats, and a corpse never

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does properly assimilate his victuals. But on the porch, in the country, one is altogether alive, and eating is a privilege given by the gods to a few mortals peculiarly deserving. Colored persons are gifted in this respect, and I am like them. Eating is with me a rapture. I look forward with gustatory bliss to each meal in turn, and afterward regard it with reminiscent delight. In fact, I am unable to wait for proper meal time, but must be eating at all hours. Food is so delicious that my joyous digestion and happy appetite are constantly a-quiver with anticipation.

Eating on the porch has for me all the excitement of foreign travel. To me, the greatest joy of a dining-car or a table in a steamship on the river, lake or sea is that you can see so much while you eat. The landscape changes more rapidly than the courses, and you, if you properly protract your meal, can devour fifty or so miles of field and forest or waves, without having them included in the check. Likewise, on a porch, you can see a panorama of interest.

My day of eating may begin with breakfast in bed on the sleeping-porch, if I like. Of course, I don't always care for this, but sometimes I love to snooze till late, in which case Thomas Jefferson

Randolph Jones brings me my tray. T. J. R. has in a manner adopted me, and follows me about, looking after my comfort and waiting on me. When my mother used to tell me of the number of slaves on her father's plantation when she was a child, and of how she was waited on by countless pickaninnies, I used to wail, "Oh, mother, why couldn't you save one for me?" Thomas Jefferson Randolph must have read the longings of my soul, for he waits on me. Perhaps the casual offerings of coin I give him from time to time encourage his devotion, but at any rate, I am well cared for.

Eating breakfast in bed is a treat to me, but not a habit so fixed, so a necessity, as in the case of some friends of mine who have no maid but like the luxury of breakfast in bed. The wife arises, prepares the meal, serves her husband his grapefruit and coffee on newspapered pillow, and then goes back to bed. Presently he arises and brings her tray to her. I don't know who washes the dishes.

Thomas Jefferson Randolph comes up the stairs with soundless barefoot step, but the clink of dishes notifies me that my tray approaches. T. J. R.'s morning grin is an affair heartening to behold in a

world where so many adults have forgotten how to grin, if indeed, they ever knew.

"Good-mawning! How you is dis mawning?" he asks as he deposits the tray on my counterpane. "How you done slep'?"

"Perfectly!" I assure him. "I had such lovely dreams that I'd have grieved at waking up if this hadn't been such a miracle of a morning. I wonder how it contrived itself."

"'Tain' no miracle—jes' lack de mawnin's we always hab," he contradicts smilingly.

"Yes, but that's just the beauty about miracles—they happen all the time."

T. J. R. digs one responsive toe into the floor as he answers the previous comment. "I dunno huccome." That is one thing I have noticed about colored conversation—there is no sense of tyrannic logic about it, no cumbering necessity for coherence, no irksome continuity.

"What have you got for my breakfast?" I inquire as my nose quivers anticipatorily at the whiffs from the covered dishes.

He removes the top from a bowl disclosing strawberries obviously picked within the hour. "'Dese is fum de ever-bearing vines mistis done had sot out fo' you to hab strawberries all summer," he announces.

"Such strawberries!" I exclaim. "And such cream to go with them!"

I roll rapturous tongue as I eat, thinking of the kind hands that had set out the berry plants, milked the cow, skimmed the cream, and brought the tray to me. (Different hands in each case, you understand, but receiving a corporate gratitude.) I think with pleasure of the good old cow that gave the milk. I don't enjoy thinking of the good old cows that furnish milk to me in the city. Milk there is an impersonal product, not sentimentalized in any way, and the least one thinks about it the more comfortable one is.

T. J. R. converses on topics of varied interest the while I eat, perching himself on a stool at my bedside, so that he can conveniently hand me things.

"And a nice plump egg on a piece of toast!" I mouth joyously.

"Aun' Mandy say tell you dat a Shanghai egg she fin' dis mawnin'."

"It surely is fresh, then."

"'Tain' so of needcessity. Ain' yo heered 'bout de Shanghai chicken?" T. J. R. giggles.

"No, what is it?"

He rocks himself back and forth on his stool, as

he chants a "ballet" concerning the fowl in question.

"Shanghai chicken an' he grow so tall,
Hoo day, hoo day!
Takes dat egg a month to fall,
Hoo day, hoo day!

Ol' Satan is mad an' I am glad,
Hoo day, hoo day!
He lost dat soul he thought he had,
Hoo day, hoo day!

When I went down in de valley for prayer,
Hoo day, hoo day!
When I got dere, Mr. Satan was dere,
Hoo day, hoo day!

What you reckon Mr. Satan say?
Hoo day, hoo day!
'You're too young to moan an' pray,'
Hoo day, hoo day!

Mr. Shanghai chicken, you look so keen,
Hoo day, hoo day!
What you reckon Mr. Satan mean?
Hoo day, hoo day!"

"You like a porched egg, doan' you?" Randy rolls his eyes and his r's at the same time. He usually omits his r's, but he puts one in here to make up.

"Yes, I do," I assert.

The next disclosure is batter-bread, piping hot, in its little baking-dish. I put butter on shamelessly and eat it with the crisp frizzled bacon and the coffee from the tiny blue pot. As I munch, I ask my servitor to give me more colored songs, preferably about food. There are many such, for the darkey, is fond of writing about what really interests him.

"I done know some 'bouten de possum," he concedes, and sings the following:

"My little dog begin to bark,

Good-bye, good-bye!

Then I went afoot to see.

He had a possum up de tree,

Good-bye, Liza Jane!

First parboil an' bake him brown,

Good-bye, good-bye!

An' wid taters lay him roun',

Good-bye, Liza Jane!

Possum meat am very sweet,

Good-bye, good-bye!

Possum meat am good to eat,

Good-bye, Liza Jane!

Lay dem taters in de pan,

Good-bye, good-bye!

Bestes eatin' in de lan',
Good-bye, Liza Jane!

Possum up a 'simmon tree,
Good-bye, good-bye,
Possum up a 'simmon tree,
Good-bye, Liza Jane!

I'se gwine away to lef' you,
Good-bye, good-bye!
I'se gwine away to lef' you,
Good-bye, Liza Jane!"

Thomas Jefferson Randolph is a true dramatic singer, for he interprets his lays with appropriate gestures and expressions.

"Give me another," I urge, in applause, whereat he chants a second song about Bre'r Possum.

"Jakey went a-huntin'
· One moonshiny night.
Jakey treed a possum
'Way up outen sight.
Jakey got his axe
An' he begin to chop.
He said, 'Look out, little chilluns,
Somepin's gwine to drop!'

Bile dat possum,
Bile dat possum down.
Bile dat possum,
Bake him till he's brown.

Won't we hab a good ol' time
When dat possum hits de groun'?

Ef you wants to cook dat possum,
I'll tell you how to do.
Put him in a fryin' pan,
Wid sweet taters, too.
Put in lots ob gravy,
Right next to de crust.
Den we'll eat dat possum,
We'll eat him 'twell we bust!

Bile dat possum,
Bile dat possum down.
Bile dat possum,
Bake him 'twell he's brown.
Won't we hab a good ol' time
When dat possum hits de groun'?"

Much of the negro folk-song consists of recitals of the pleasures of the palate, because colored people versify about subjects of genuine interest, instead of what they think would genteelly concern them. One reason for so many sorry verses among white people is the custom of attempting to poetize on indifferent subjects, void of personal interest. If poets would be sincere with themselves and their world, and would sing of matters that really thrill them, like cold shower-baths, for instance, and hot broiled steak, and waffles, and sleeping on

the porch, and the first green corn of the season, instead of sonneteering over eyebrows and parting sighs, literature would have much more flavor. The poets have set a false standard of values upon details of life, to which the world tamely submits. What a revival of popular interest in poetry there would be if writers of verse concerned themselves with emotions actually dominant, instead of those conventionally supposititious!

Now, Thomas Jefferson Randolph, being chiefly interested in eating, sings of food and the joys of consumption. I, being of sympathetic palate, enjoy his ditties and call for a third helping.

“Wake, oh, mistis, peas in de pot,
Hoe-cake bakin’!
Master had a dwellin’ house
Sixteen stories high,
An’ ebery room in dat house
Was filled wid pumpkin pie.

Ef I had a scoldin’ wife,
Ez sure as you are bawn,
I’d take her down to New Orleans
An’ trade her off for cawn!
Wake, oh, mistis, peas in de pot,
Hoe-cake bakin’!”

Presently, having eaten enough to satisfy even a Jeffersonian appetite, I rise and move down-

stairs to find out what more active members of the household are engaged in doing. I settle myself on the front porch in my couch, and swing lazily to and fro. After a while Aunt Mandy comes out with a plate of gingersnaps, or a "sampler" of the cake she is baking, or perhaps the crusty end of a loaf of new-made bread, spread thickly with yellow butter, for my delectation.

Later in the morning the family will probably be called together on the back porch to eat watermelon, Mose having sneaked a big rattlesnake melon in the "refrigerator" the night before, and summoning us for a surprise. You who have eaten watermelon only in seemly slices at the dinner-table know nothing of its lusciousness. It should be eaten by one leaning over the rail of the porch, or better still in a large bathtub. You bury your face in it if you wish, and you eat rapturously of the red heart. Somehow you never get any of the heart of watermelon in restaurants—perhaps that is reserved for the waiters or other millionaires.

Mose and T. J. R. and Tishie and Aunt Mandy are also eating watermelon, on the kitchen porch. As Mose walks off, wiping his hands and his red, turnover lips, on his sleeve, he sings,

“De ham-bome am sweet,
De possum am good,
An’ de chicken meat am berry, berry fine.
But gimme, oh, gimme,
Oh, how I wish you’d gimme
Dat water-milyon smilin’ on de vine!”

Dinner in Virginia comes in the middle of the day. Unless there’s formal company here, dinner is served on the side porch, so that we may see the road and keep up with the passing show the while we eat, a costless and perpetually changing cabaret. Tish gives us entertaining information concerning the travelers, as well as of the sources of the food we’re partaking of. There may be Brunswick stew, for example. I’m satisfied the gods on high Olympus had Brunswick stew on festival occasions, though it couldn’t have been half so good as this prepared by Aunt Mandy, or any other elderly colored cook in Virginia. Tishie will tell us that Aunt Mandy made the stew because Mose has gone hunting the day before and shot some squirrels. Mose isn’t allowed to touch a squirrel on this place, but who could prevent his going into the far woods?

There’ll be various vegetables in the stew, corn, okra, and so forth. I cannot give you the

recipe for it, since in Virginia cooking is done by inspiration, rather than by rule in books, and colored women are convinced that measuring would spoil any concoction. Aunt Mandy will tell me that she takes a few eggs, some milk, about so much butter, as much sugar as she thinks right, and flour and flavoring to taste, and makes a cake. She couldn't follow a printed recipe, for she doesn't know how to read, and so she measures things in her head, she tells me. The results are eminently satisfactory.

If there isn't Brunswick stew, there is likely to be fried chicken, especially if guests are here. Aunt Mandy's favorite saying is, "Company's coming. I got to kill a fried chicken an' churn." If important guests are announced she will say, "I'll hab to put de big pot in de little one an' make hash outen de dish-rag."

Tishie doesn't know that servitors are not expected to join in the conversation, for when we family are alone, she entertains us with news of the barnyard and garden, about the hawk that Mose almost shot yesterday, or the weasel that got into the chicken house last night and killed some promising yellow-legged pullets. She will identify the special fowl we may be eating in some such fashion

as, "Dishere is fum de incrubator hatchin' dat was mos'ly spiled by de blastin'," or "Dishere is is one ob de young roosters Mr. Patrick done sont you early in de spring." Or maybe she breaks to us some tragedy as, "Dis young fool rooster wid de yaller laigs, he done stan' in de middle ob de road to crow ober an ottermobile. He ain' gwine crow no mo'. Mose seen hit an' brung him to de house, an' Aunt Mandy, she popped him into de skillet."

We grieve resignedly over the frustrated pride, the egocentric energy of young roosters, and yet the curtailed crow seems to add a flavor to the dish.

There are Irish potatoes smothered in cream, potatoes unqualified, of course, meaning sweet potatoes. "Dey is fum de lazy-bed," Tishie informs us.

"What is a lazy-bed?" I ask.

"Wellum, a lazy man's potato bed, or jes' a lazy-bed, as we ginerally calls hit, am a bed where de potatoes ain' planted but dey jes' grows. You git hit started once, an' cover hit with pine tags, an' don' disturb hit, an' de taters grow corntinually fum year to year. Any time you wants any, you kin grub down in dere an' git some young new potatoes, even in de winter time. Mose, he got a lazy-bed back ob de 'lasses cane."

There's sure to be young corn cooked in some delicious way, since Mose plants corn every two weeks during the summer, to guarantee a proper supply of roasting ears. Of course, we have corn bread, because Southerners have always loved it. We didn't have to wait for the exigencies of war time to learn to eat corn bread. It amused us to read those anxious editorials in Northern papers, urging the attractions of corn bread. Who has eaten it made by a Southern darkey has tasted one of life's chief joys. There's egg bread, made with egg and buttermilk, baked in a pan, or in little sticks so that those who like crust may have it in abundance. Aunt Mandy also makes corn pone, or "dodger," with meal and hot water and salt, shaping it into little cakes. Bread of the North was never like it!

Rice is another thing that Northern editors discovered for the purpose of saving wheat. But only a Southerner knows how to cook it with each grain separate, since the South has loved it for generations. For dessert we may have blackberry cobbler, made from berries T. J. R. and I may have picked in the woods, or there may be raspberries and cream, or any one of a number of delicious things Aunt Mandy knows how to make.

There will be an extra place at the table for the unexpected guest, who is usually here, for, while hospitality is almost obsolete in some sections of the country, it is not so in the South. Southern hospitality is a delightful thing in many ways, but countless crimes are committed in its name.

After dinner we all move out to the front porch, where the men smoke fat cigars, and the women exchange confidences concerning methods of canning. I release my mind on little excursions of its own, and am only half aware of conversations that blend into each other in my ears, so that I overhear snatches of suggestions that the cold-pack method is the best way to can stubborn politicians in dry weather, and that tomatoes should have four rows of purling three days in succession to kill the germs.

Presently I leave the enthusiasts talking, and go up to my sleeping-porch for a nap, but still into my ears pours the flood of conversation, lulling me into slumber.

I am awakened by the uphill snort of an auto, which means that afternoon callers are arriving. It is a beautiful blonde afternoon, with blue eyes and sunshine hair, and so everybody feels like getting out into the country to behold it. And, of

course, the fresh air has given everyone an appetite, so Tish trundles out the tea wagon, and we eat once more. Those who do not care for hot tea may have tea in glasses with mint and crushed ice. What conceivable sound is more musical than the tinkle of ice in the glasses on a warm afternoon? And what colors more attractive than the amber and soft green together? Or perhaps there's grape juice, a beverage that we've made ourselves from grapes that T. J. R. and I have gathered from the arbor, so that all manner of associations cluster round it. There are little cakes, and divers sandwiches that Aunt Mandy's unlettered hands know how to fashion cunningly. I do think that if Aunt Mandy learned to read, her bread wouldn't be half so light as it is!

The Doctor usually drops in from visiting a country patient—since he is most devoted to his illnesses in this section of the country. He expertly passes the tea things, with jocular conversation. The Professor, on the other hand, sits a little apart from the crowd and talks to me, while he looks at Lucia. Lucia, perverse creature, talks brightly to the Doctor, with only an occasional, quickly withdrawn glance at our part of the porch.

"Why does she dislike me so?" he murmurs wistfully.

"Because she doesn't!" I answer promptly. "If she hated you, the chances are she'd be beautifully courteous to you. She's afraid of you, and I think she doesn't wish to fall in love perhaps. Perhaps she feels herself teetering on the edge of the precipice and she's leaning backward to catch herself, to keep her balance. Possibly I've done you an injustice by advocating your cause. I think I'll try abusing you, and see how that works."

"What can I do?" his blue eyes ask me.

"Just wait," I caution him between bites of sandwich. "But don't wait—too long!"

We sit in silence for a moment, then turn to listen to the mocking bird perched on a swaying rose vine, singing a golden song to his mate.

"How I envy him his readiness of speech!" the Professor grumbles. "He's quite a clever phrase-maker, isn't he?"

"Yes, but he's such a plagiarist," I argue. "Those creatures to whom rhapsodies come so easily are usually speaking more from imitation than emotion. All the same, it wouldn't hurt you

to practice a little song against the time you'll feel impelled to sing."

Supper is served on the side-porch, except on Sunday night when the colored folk are gone, when we have cold supper from the tea wagon anywhere we happen to be. At ordinary suppers there are all sorts of delicious things, waffles, with honey, or Sally Lunn, light as down. One young fellow who was here the other night, tasting it for the first time, laughed and on being pressed for an answer, said, "You know my father used to live in Virginia when he was young, and I've heard him say so often how he loved Sally Lunn, but I thought she was an old sweetheart of his. To think it's just a bread!"

There may be broiled chicken, or a young rabbit that Mose has caught trespassing in the garden. There'll be sweet potatoes cooked in some appetizing way. I think sweet potatoes give me more constant pleasure than any other form of food, and a world without them would be less joyous for me than it is. But I cannot enumerate the good things that Aunt Mandy might give us for supper, for she is versatile, and has country resources to draw upon. Whatever we have, anyhow, taste

better for being eaten in the open, with the pine trees talking to us, and the sleepy sounds of chickens going to bed, and the effervescent yelps of puppies sounding in our ears.

I love James Whitcomb Riley's little poem, *When We Et out on the Porch*. Eating is a social rite made more enjoyable by being shared with Nature herself. It is Nature who gives us what we eat, and to dine or sup in her benignant presence makes us doubly blessed. When you break bread with a friend, or a chance comer who perhaps needs your help, you share more than food with him, if you eat on the porch. You share with him the earth and the beauty thereof, the sky, and what lies beyond it. When you bow your head to render thanks to Him who gave the food, you seem more in His presence in the open than when shut in secret rooms. There is an out-of-door grace that niggard walls never know.

After I have gone to bed, Lucia slips in to bring me a box of candy that the Doctor has brought me, knowing I love to eat in bed. She sits down on the little stool beside the bed, with hands folded restlessly in her lap.

"I think I'm going to marry the Doctor," she says in a low voice, after a while.

"You are not!" I cry, sitting bolt upright, full of rage and caramel. "You shan't marry the man that killed my pet frog—my poor, affectionate little frog that never did anybody any harm! Besides—he wouldn't make you happy!"

"What is happiness?" she answers listlessly. "Anyhow, he didn't intend to hurt Nip."

"Don't tell me!" I contend with heat. "Aren't Doctors *always* experimenting with frogs in a perfectly cold-blooded fashion? And he never has seemed repentant enough—he thinks it a joke! Happiness my love, is dependent on the nature of your husband's sense of humor!"

"You'd like me to marry into a Boston cemetery, I suppose!" she says sarcastically.

"Better that than a Virginia laboratory!" I retort, crunching the Doctor's chocolates with ungrateful relish. "Hasn't that tombstone read you an inscription yet?"

"Not a word!"

"Well, I'll admit that's rather slow, even for Boston. But then he hasn't had as much practice in proposing as that light-tongued Doctor. But just remember that he's from Boston."

"I certainly shall!" she says distinctly, as she turns to go. "I wouldn't eat too much of that candy if I were you, especially when you entertain such emotions of rage toward the giver. Anger is bad for the digestion, you know."

"You talk like a doctor's wife already!" I cry. "Go! I dislike you. You haven't told the Doctor you're thinking of marrying him, have you?" I hurl after her.

"No, he just keeps on telling me."

"Oh, that's all right then," I murmur to the box of candy, and go to sleep to dream of caramels in the shape of tombstones with fervid inscriptions.

X

SLEEPING OUT

SLEEPING on a country porch is so delightful an experience that one really should stay awake all night to get the full pleasure of it. One realizes the world and feels the sensuous magic of it more when one is half asleep than when one is fully awake. Perhaps then the intellect, the cold mechanism of logic, is disregarded, and one merely feels, but feels in a sublimated way. The avenues of the senses are wide open, and through the sight, the sound, the smell, the touch, one is made aware of the enchanted world without. Sleep is not a tyrant to be resisted, as by a child afraid of missing something if he goes to bed, or a wraith to be hopelessly pursued, as by an insomniac, but a lovely being, lingering near, but not intrusive. On a country porch one does not feel the bitterness of waking up as in the inside of a house, especially in the city, where one feels that one has not slept enough, yet must arise to work. Sleep in the open

is much more restorative, so that one needs less of it and hence can give a portion of the night to pure enjoyment of his sensations.

The porch on which I sleep is on the side of the house, so that I am near both the front and the back, can hear the sounds from the farmyard, from the roadway, and from the lake as well. I love to lie dreamily and analyze the sounds I hear. The country is supposed to be quiet in comparison with the city, but it is full of half-distinguishable noises, all restful to the nerves. The bullfrogs in the lake give their booming croaks at intervals through the night, deep basses that no human throat can reproduce; the crickets sleepily chirp as if on watch, and from some tree near by sounds the eerie tremulo of the screech-owl, with its musical, premonitory note of woe. The mocking bird, waked by the weight of emotion its little breast can no longer bear, seeks relief in expression, in a dream-haunted song.

Hark! through the dark
And moonless magic of the night,
That yet with faint, suffused light is bright,
From where on high sphereth the star-sown sky,
Is tremulous heard
The mocking bird!

Hear! through the clear
Hushed stillness of the lonely hour,
With what immortal power down shower
Such lyric rhapsodies! such ecstasies
Of golden joy
His notes employ!

Lo! sad and slow
Heart-broken strains of woe are wrung
As when by tremulous tongue of age are sung
The elegies of well-beloved youth, the ruth
Of sorrow's load,
Grief's palinode!

Love, joyous love,
Is now his passion-thrilled theme,
The wakeful wonder of his dream supreme.
He darkling gropes to dim, delirious hopes,
And trembling pleads
All love's sweet needs.

How mayest thou
The cycle of all human feeling voice,
Grieve with the bereaven, rejoice with dulcet joys?
Is thy song, then, vicarious, for us?
Sing undeterred,
Oh, poet bird!

From far across the fields comes the cry of a
pack of hounds as they start on a fox hunt, their
deep-voiced ululations rising and falling in melan-

choly intonations, to be answered by the voices of the other hounds near by. The cry of a hound is a pathetic, wild music unlike anything else. It sounds as if wrung from the heart of a captive creature, but the fox says nothing, curiously enough!

I can hear a troop of negroes passing along the road, singing as they go home from some colored gathering, their rich, mournful voices making haunting echoes in the heart. The negro is so religious in a pagan way that he puts his whole heart into crude folk-songs and hymns in a manner to shake the soul of any hearer. I forget the child-like absurdities of the language, and feel only, "This is real music and real religion!" One who has never heard a band of old-fashioned negroes singing such hymns as "Roll, Jordan, Roll," or "Pharaoh's Army" has missed the sweetest thrill that harmony can give. The chant floats up to me,

"Oh, Mary, don't you weep no more,
Don't you moan!
Pharaoh's army got drowned in de Red Sea—
Oh, Mary, don't you weep, don't you moan!

Some ob dese mawnin's bright an' fair,
I'll take my wings an' cleave de air;

Pharaoh's army got drowned in de Red Sea,
Oh, Mary, don't you weep, don't you moan!

When I get to Hebben, I'm gwine to put on my shoes,
I'm gwine roun' Glory an' tell all de news;
Pharaoh's army got drowned in de Red Sea,
Oh, Mary, don't you weep, don't you moan!

When I get to Hebben I'm gwine to sing an' shout;
Dey's no one dere to turn me out;
Pharaoh's army got drowned in de Red Sea—
Oh, Mary, don't you weep, don't you moan!"

Sometimes, we are wakened in the middle of the night to hear guitars, and unformed young voices singing about love and other such inconsequential matters, at which the young girls in the house twitter excitedly, but I go off again into dreams. I love to dream at such a time, for the dreams woven about a serenade are lovelier than the serenade itself.

The early morning sounds are as captivating as those of the night, for a rose-vine taps at my screen to summon me for a new day, and a fat rosebud peers in to see if I am awake or only pretending. The birds are up early, and have all manner of matutinal confidences to exchange. Presently I can hear the chickens stir, and a young rooster, swelling with importance, announces the dawn,

whereat the hens cackle for their breakfast. The ducks, released from overnight confinement, start down the hill in enfilade, to spend the day on the lake, quacking as they go, *Quack . . . quack . . . quack*. The guinea's *pot-rack, pot-rack*, is answered by the turkey's *gobble—gobble* as the fowls scatter for the day. *Quack . . . quack . . . pot-rack . . . pot-rack . . . gobble—gobble—*. Aunt Mandy is to be heard making breakfast stirrings, singing a few stanzas of one of her endless songs:

“Angel come down an’ trouble de waters,
Angel come down an’ trouble de waters,
Angel come down an’ trouble de waters,
It’s de day ob Jubilee!

Rise, shine an’ gib God de glory,
Rise, shine an’ gib God de glory,
Rise, shine an’ gib God de glory,
It’s de day ob Jubilee!”

Mose is chopping wood, his rhythmic strokes accompanied by a song with a monotonous refrain.

“I don’t like to work, but I needs de arns,
I don’t like to work but I needs de arns,
I don’t like to work, but I needs de arns.”

The scents of the night and of the very early morning are particularly pleasant, for the dew brings out a sweetness unknown by day, I think, and all the garden odors float up to me, mingled with the scent of clover blossoms, and the perfume of wet pine boughs. My dreams are perfumed, as never in the city. Sometimes I lie awake and try to single out the various scents, seeking to distinguish the individual sweetness of each thing, then again enjoying the composite bouquet. The scent of the star-jasmine comes stealing up from the vine clinging to the trellis on the wall, and the odor of the wild honeysuckle is unmistakable, while the sweet basil in the flower-beds below sends up a spicy richness. When there is rain, the odors are more clearly distinguishable than at other times.

I love the feel of the cool wind on my cheeks and the luxury of it in my lungs. My lungs, that in winter are subwayward, expand on the porch in a happy fullness of life. I love the touch of the little ambiguous breezes that steal about my pillow, and the occasional spray of rain that comes in upon me through the screen. I lie with half-shut eyes to watch the sleazy little rain falling, and see the big drops roll down from the eaves. Rain in the country is far more companionable a thing than it is

in the city. In town, one wishes to come in out of the rain, but in the country, one feels the impulse to get out into it.

I love the pictures that the night brings to my porch pillow, the exhibit hung on the line outside for me to see. The trees are sprangled against the sky, like quaint Japanese prints, the poplars with their great pointing pencils lifted upward, the oaks with heavy draperies about them, the pines with swaying tops, the younger trees, more emotional with rocking arms. Against the sky is the soft glow in the clouds, above where the city's lights are shining through the distance and the dark. The pictures change night by night, according to the notion of the moon. Sometimes there's a flame-colored moon that floats up the sky over the tops of the trees, like a child's bright balloon that has escaped and gone to seek the stars. Sometimes there's a moon all pale, shedding a cool radiance on the lake, touching the reeds by the water's edge to an unearthly beauty. Sometimes the moon is a cryptic stone, covered with magic runes, and sometimes it is a curved spear. There are nights when there's no moon at all, when the heavens are dark, and others when the tinsel stars spangle the black sky, as if a widow

should strew little gold flowers all over her crêpe veil.

The physical and mental sensations of dropping off to sleep on a porch in the country are altogether pleasant. I look with sleepy gaze to the lake where I see a little boat stealing across the silver bands of moonlight. Presently I feel myself in that little boat, swaying, swaying, drifting, drifting. The lake expands insensibly, and I am on the ocean in a wave-rocked boat of dreams. I float forever in a wide and quiet sea, while æons roll and roll past me. My boat is submerged, and I sink to soundless depths, to blue miracles of water, down, down, down—so that I am drowned in seas of sleep, a delicious drowning, in which all life's happinesses sweep before me. Drowned . . . deliciously.

I am in a cosmic cradle, crooned over by swaying winds. In that mystic chant I sense the meaning of all earth's riddles, am steeped in all mortal sweetnesses, hear all the world's harmonies upgathered into one, and meant for me alone. I am swayed to and fro on the tops of gentle trees, trees I have always loved from a distance and never been quite able to reach before, friendly trees that take me into their confidence and make me wise of secrets never known before. How sage are trees, and

how benignant! How soft their rocking arms, how safe their mighty clasp!

I am borne languorously on those white clouds along the Milky Way, sweeping with light majesty over sleeping cities that have no knowledge of my passing, past spires of country churches, and rivers flowing to the sea, and mountains that forever stand in silence and in thought. How wonderful is silence and how supreme is thought—if only man could know!

I lie on the grass strewn with perfumed clover and listen to the grass blades whispering as they grow. I rise upward on the mist that floats above the lake, and slide down starbeams. I know all things, and feel all things, and am at one with all, as I sleep . . . sleep . . . sleep.

Porch dreams are delectable experiences, very different from the drugged unconsciousness of indoor sleep, or the morbid nightmares that infest the walls of houses. I am always happy in my porch dreams, am always clutching some longed-for joy, or realizing some erstwhile denied ambition, or discovering in myself new powers that I have not hitherto been aware of. I have new sensations, such as riding in an aeroplane and racing with an eagle through the blue, blue sky or skiing, skiing

gaily down some unresisting slope of snow like nonchalant lightning, or playing a fugue on a pipe organ, or singing in a golden voice. *That* is one of my favorite dreams! Another is fancying that I wake up to find that my eyes are brown, as all my life I've wished they were.

Then again I have dreams that are purely entertaining, not realizing any heart's desire, but merely pastime visions, which are sometimes clearly traceable to my late reading in bed. For instance, I had a curious dream not long ago, after reading in the dictionary just before I went to sleep—for there's no book that gives me more pleasure than the dictionary, despite its frequent change of subject. I love to study words and their whimsical ways, since they are such living things and so sensitive. They have such a strict code as to their respective duties and resent being made to serve in the place of others as strongly as did the servants of the Spanish king who was allowed to die of chill (or was it over heat?) because no one of the roomful of courtiers about him would poke the fire in the temporary absence of the one person whose duty it was to look after it.

I dreamed that I was at a word-party given by several famous lexicographers, to which all the

words were bidden. Anglo-Saxon words were there in their homespun garments, while the Norman French terms were haughty in their silks and satins, and the modern slang jostled them rudely aside, clad in gay sports clothes. Each word was dressed in the costume of its native country, so the scene was varied and lively. Archaic words, ancient, aged crones leaning on sticks, hobbled about, while vulgar new words elbowed their way into the society of their betters. There were even the dead words there, shrouded and coffined, but still insisting on being kept in the dictionary.

Some carried musical instruments that gave pleasing sounds, while others had contrivances that made harsh noises; some moved trippingly on the tongue, while others stalked haughtily, and others awkwardly stumbled. There were words from the same family gathered together in groups, while the ancientest grandsire words, mere Sanskrit roots, kept off to themselves, as if astonished and dismayed to see what they were responsible for.

I saw a few words that hung shamefacedly in the corner and, "Who are they?" I asked Sir James Murray, who was talking with Noah Webster.

"They are words that have no right to existence," he explained, "formed from a union of words that do not belong together."

"Poor things!" I cried in pity.

"Yes, but we must preserve the standards of the language."

While I looked at them, those words faded away, the adjectives lost their bright colorful character, the verbs became less virile, and all of the brilliant company melted into printer's ink before my very eyes, my eyes that I rubbed incredulously.

Another porch dream I had recently was disconcerting, but possessing nothing of the morbidity of house dreams. I dreamed that I dreamed, and knew that my dreams had a curious, compelling, prophetic power over my actions. What I dreamed I was, I immediately became on waking, and likewise what I fancied in my sleep that I did, I was compelled to do as soon as I woke up. I visioned myself, for instance, as clad in cap and gown and hood, marching in commencement procession at my university, only to discover, just as I was stepping on the platform reserved for members of the faculty, that I was barefooted. That universal dream ordinarily would evoke only a laugh, and a waking sense of relief that it was not true. Not so

in this case! As soon as I waked from my dream within my dream, I was forced by strange requirement to go through the actual experience, to march across the platform, my bare toes wiggling in anguish under the cold, disapproving stare of the president.

And not only did my own dreams control my waking actions, but my dreams of others governed them and vice versa. If I dreamed, for example, that I met Lord Dunsany, clad in tiger skins, and playing pipes of Pan, walking down Fifth Avenue, and that I trotted along beside him, telling how much I liked his wonder tales, I must see the performance through, no matter how Lord Dunsany might protest. And similarly, other people's dreams of me caused me to act quite out of character. Altogether, life held a variableness and uncertainty that I found entertaining but alarming, and I was glad on the whole to wake from my double dream to find that I was captain of my fate. The only thing I regretted, however, was that during that magic interval I didn't have the forethought to dream some useful dreams concerning editors, and other pleasant dispensers of life's bonuses.

The nightmares that infest house sleep usually bring one back to consciousness with a start, with

a dreadful sense of horror past or to come, and at least partially present, but porch dreams leave a lingering sense of pleasure. And one slides so gently back into slumber that one dream melts into another.

I have been interested to test my goings to sleep and my wakings up, to find which of my senses leaves me first, which lingers with me longest. Of course, when I am just dropping out of consciousness, I have no pencil in hand to take notes, and the concepts I form are likely to be blurred before I get round to recording them, but a few things I have observed. I notice that I first lose the sense of sight, that is, my eyes close first, and I am too drowsy to see anything distinctly, even when I am conscious of scents and sounds and the feel of the wind on my face. That may, of course, be due to the fact that my eyes have curtains that automatically adjust themselves, blinds that draw themselves, while the ears have no such mechanism but must remain open to sensations till the brain itself goes to sleep. If I doze off to sleep, for instance, with a chocolate drop in my mouth (oh, I know it's a reprehensible habit and designed to enrich the dentist, but I am as I am!), I lose the sense of taste soon after my eyelids close. But I

can still smell the honeysuckle or the clover after I have forgotten how the chocolate tastes, though not so long as I can feel the soft wind flutter my hair and brush my cheek. Through the passing of all these sensations I can still distinguish sounds. still hear the cricket chirping, still hear the occasional whimper of a hound in the kennel, still hear the boom of the bullfrog in the lake. When I stop hearing that frog and that dog, I know I'm gone for the night!

I wake up in the inverse order, being able to hear before I distinguish scent or taste or touch. The rattle of dishes comes to me from the dining-room before the scent of breakfast coffee, and I feel the sunbeam on my cheek before I open my eyes to see anything. I wonder which of the senses is the first to leave a dying person—which the last! Which sense will be the first to wake to a fairer day? Or perhaps then our senses will not be controlled by the brain, but by the heart, and all respond at once. I wonder!

The porch, the hill, the lake are drenched in moonlight, the scent of roses is on the air, and night has laid a finger of silence on her lip, the while I sleep. I open dreamy eyes just wide enough to see

a little boat drifting in the enchanted moonlight, and to hear voices singing, the sound borne across the water.

I fall asleep again, and when I stir once more, it is to hear voices on the porch below, on the corner next my sleeping porch, a murmurous conversation that is yet so distinct that I can know what is being said. But when one is not fully awake, one's conscience is not in first-rate working order, is the last thing to be aroused, in fact, so I do not realize the culpability of eavesdropping. Besides, is it not my porch, and wasn't I here first?

I hear a man say, "*Lucia*," and I know it isn't the Doctor's bland accents, though it is in a tone not at first recognizable. But finally I know that it is the Professor who is speaking. But can it be his reserved voice that is full of such hasteful passion, such ardent feeling?

"*Lucia! I love you! I love you!*"

"But I don't wish you to love me!" she cries out. "I tell you I'm afraid of you!"

"Oh, Lucia—why?"

She speaks vehemently. "Because you are so reserved, and cold, and stern! Your gaze seems always weighing me and finding me wanting, and I'm not used to that. Suppose I married you, and

you looked at me with a cold, hard gaze? You say you love me, but I think you don't know what love is!"

There is a moment's silence. Oh, how I should like to go down and shake that girl!

At last he speaks, gently, but with a note of bitterness I have never heard in his voice before. "I have had little chance in my life to know what love is."

"You were never in love before?" She throws the words at him.

"I'll try to explain to you, but you'll probably not understand, since it has all been so different from what you have known," he says patiently. "Your life has been compassed about with love, so that you do not know what any other could be like. No, I haven't been in love, as you call it. Nor have I known other types of love."

"What do you mean?" she interrupts.

"My mother died when I was a baby," he says quietly. "I never knew her, so that I haven't even any memories of her. My father was a very busy man, who didn't feel he could spare the time to make friends with his boy. He was cold and reserved in manner, as you say I am, so doubtless

I inherited that misfortune from him. My father left me in charge of a half-sister of his, a woman much older than he was. I lived with her till I went off to boarding-school."

"What was she like?" the girl questions.

"She was a good woman, but not one who should have the care of children. She never loved me, and I knew it even when I was a baby. I used to try to win her heart, but it was no use. She didn't like boys. She thought boys were born evil, and must be controlled with steel, so she was strict and stern with me. I never knew anything but inhibition in my life. I used to hunger for love, for demonstration of affection. I think I must have been like my mother in that."

He hesitates an instant.

"Many a time I've cried myself to sleep because no one ever kissed me, or said little foolish nothings to me, as mothers do. It would have been different, of course, if my mother had lived. But I was taught repression, always repression. I must never make any noise. If I cried, I was punished. If I brought myself forward in any way, I was taught my place!"

"How dreadful!" Lucia cries.

"Yes, it was pretty hard for a child. You see, inhibition of my feelings was forced into a habit with me. I learned to repress myself utterly. I went about with lips tight closed, without making any noise, hiding in corners, a little lonely boy! Oh, I want a little boy of my own, so that I may treat him differently!"

He checks himself.

"By the time I was sent off to boarding-school, I wasn't fitted for association with other boys more normal. They didn't understand me, and thought me priggish, when I was bursting with loneliness. So my school days weren't much happier than those at home had been."

"After that?"

"After that came college, which was much the same. I did good work, and the profs. praised me, but I'd have given all the honors I ever earned for a slap on the back from one of the fellows. They respected me, but I didn't want respect. I wanted comradeship.

"So that's why I am as I am. You are the only person I have ever really loved, and my heart cries out for love of you, but I don't know how to express it! *And you think me cold!* I knew when I was a child that Aunt Sarah was being cruel to

me, but I couldn't guess the greatness of the wrong she was doing me. *She has made it impossible for you to love me! Lucia!*"

I hear a little sob, and a soft rustle and stir as of skirts. I lean on my elbow and look down on the porch at right angles to my porch, and see Lucia, the haughty, the proud Lucia, draw his head down to hers and, with her arms about his neck, give him a quick kiss.

His arms are about her. "You love me, Lucia?" he cries incredulously.

"I love the little boy you used to be!" she says brokenly. "That kiss was for him!"

"And none for the man?" he pleads. "Do you love me, Lucia?"

"Yes, yes!" she cries. "I guess I always have, but I was afraid of you."

"And now?"

"Now I'll never be afraid of you any more! Oh, how I hate myself!"

"*I—don't hate you, Lucia!*" he murmurs half articulately.

I put my face against the screen and speak quite distinctly. "Would you dear young creatures kindly move your protestations to the other end of the porch?"

"Oh," cries Lucia, in agitation. "Did we disturb you? Were you asleep?"

"Yes, you disturb me!" I answer shortly. "I've listened as long as my conscience will let me, and if you stay here any longer, I'll have to put a pillow over my ears. And a pillow is not pleasing on a summer night. Ears wake up more easily than any other senses, I have learned."

"We go, sweet Porcher," laughed the Professor. It is really the first time I remember hearing him laugh out loud.

"We have something to tell you in the morning, Porcher," says Lucia.

"No, you haven't!" I contradict her crossly. "I knew it long before either of you did. Haven't I been telling you of it all summer?"

"Yes, but to-night——"

"I know about to-night, too. I was asleep, but my ears were awake."

"We don't mind what you heard, Porcher," says he. "We'd have told you all about it in the morning anyhow."

"Well, go on away now, and let me get some sleep. I must begin planning for a wedding, to-morrow. I insist that it shall be on the front porch."

XI

PORCH RAILLERY

I WAS sitting on the porch last night, steeped in dreams. It was twelve o'clock, and the others of the household were all asleep, but the white magic of the moon had so bewitched me that I could not go inside. I sat on the steps, nursing my knees and watching the lilies nod in the moonlight, or studying the tracery of the pine trees against the sky, or wondering at the grace of the Lombardy poplars that rose like tall altar candles lifted for the stars to light. The gazing-globe was a great silver moon dropped down upon a pedestal, reflecting the clouds it had fallen through. The thousand night scents were gathered into one dewy perfume unimaguably sweet. The little brook talked softly to itself astir in its pebbly bed, and the birds chirped sleepily now and then as if they hated to spend such wonderful hours in slumber. I watched the ghostly clouds that went a-traveling across the sky, making no sound, leaving no foot-

print, with not even the Milky Way to find their path back home by.

Suddenly I heard a rustle in the shrubbery toward the little path that comes up the hill from the lake, accompanied by a curious, clinking sound. Presently the bushes were thrust aside and a figure stepped into the light as he came toward me. He had on a broad hat such as men wear on the plains, a flannel shirt open at the throat, corduroy trousers, and a belt with a brace of pistols stuck into it.

He took off his hat with a grandiose sweep as he saw me. "Good-evening!"

"Good-evening," I saluted him, rising.

"I heard you was from Texas and liked my sort of folks, so I thought I'd look you up," he said jauntily.

"Yes, Mr.——?"

"Dave Billings," he proffered.

"I'm always glad to see any one from Texas, Mr. Billings. Come in and have a seat. You're a cowboy, I believe?"

"Yes'm, you might say so," he conceded, as he eased himself into a big chair and dropped his huge hat on the floor. "Though I'm not on the job right now."

"Why didn't you come earlier?" I hazarded.
 "It's rather late for a call, isn't it?"

"No'm, not for my kind. We don't generally go abroad till about midnight, that is, the old-fashioned ones don't. Some of the new-style ones go out any time o' day they like. It's just as they chooses, you see."

"I don't remember having noticed that tendency among Texans," I murmured. "Sounds more like New York to me."

"I'm not talking about Texas folks now," he said, patient with my ignorance. "I'm speakin' o' ghosts."

"Do you mean to say you're a ghost!"

"Surest thing you know!" he grinned. "I heard that you was fond of ghosts, an' since there ain't many folks that are, I thought I'd come around. To tell the truth, I'm lonesome."

"I certainly am glad to see you!" I ejaculated cordially. "I've never seen a ghost before. I've thought a lot about them, but I've never met one. How long have you been one, may I ask?"

He leaned back comfortably in the big chair, stretching out his legs. "'Bout two months. Had a little fracas with Old Man Anson 'bout some steers, an' the durned ol' cuss shot before I

could draw my gun. He sure was quick on the trigger."

"That was too bad!" I mourned, then suddenly giggled. "I've often grieved with other people about other people's deaths, but I never before sympathized with a ghost about his own taking off!"

"'Tis funny!" He shook appreciatively.

"Do you mind telling me what is that curious noise I keep hearing?" I asked. "Is it your skeleton rattling?"

"No'm, it's my spurs," he responded courteously, protruding two prodigious feet into the moonlight, and exhibiting spurs to his boots. As he gave a sudden kick, there was a musical jingle.

"Got little bells on 'em," he explained. "When I dance they play regular tunes. Foot-bell ringers you might call them."

"How lovely!" I cried. "But tell me how you come to be so far from home—if you still call Texas home," I amended quickly.

"Sure thing!" he said emphatically. "Can't show *me* no better heaven! But I just thought I'd shake my hoof a bit and see the world, since I never had no chance while I was working on the ranch."

"And you say you've been lonesome?"

"Bet your life! Folks sure do turn the cold shoulder to ghosts. Most folks don't even so much as *see* us, and those that do are skeered enough to jump outer their skins. This is the first real mouthful of talk I've had with a live one since I was killed."

"You're the livest dead person I ever heard of!" I ejaculated.

"No'm, plenty like me. There's a herd of 'em down by the lake right now, hungering for a little human companionship."

"Why didn't you bring them up? I'd love to meet them."

"I'll go get 'em now," he said, jointing his long limbs as he rose from the chair. "They're really sorter expecting to be sent for. They're waiting down there till I come back."

"By all means bring them."

He jingled off down the hill, singing a song about Texas:

"Where the prairie dog kneels on the backs of his heels
And fervently prays for a rain!"

I hastily shook up sofa pillows, pushed forward easy-chairs, and made what preparations I could for my guests.

I heard them coming up the hill. They appeared one at a time on the steps leading to a slightly elevated portion of the lawn, through the shrubbery that half conceals the entrance. Each one came from the shadow into the bright patch of moonlight that played about him like a spectral spot light on a ghostly stage. David Belasco himself couldn't have arranged it better, and I had a momentary pang of regret that he wasn't there to see.

There were two coal-black ghosts in the lot, one enormous giant of a negro in khaki, that made an impressive figure in the moonlight, with his black, black face, his eyes like hard-boiled eggs, and his ashy lips. The other was a mere boy, about seventeen years old, in ragged clothes, and with a couple of adventurous toes starting out into the world to seek misfortune.

I greeted the troupe cordially on the steps, though a hasty reflection made me decide against offering to shake hands with them. Ghosts are delightful, of course, but somehow you don't feel like touching them, any more than you do the cold underpart of a frog's body, or a bat's uncanny wing. I pushed chairs forward for them, and they were all seated presently, the two black shadows casting themselves on the steps.

Dave Billings hadn't introduced them to me as individuals, and they had not offered their names, so I smothered my curiosity for the moment and determined to find out by degrees who and what and why they were.

"Mind if we smoke?" inquired the cowboy.

"Not at all," I assured him. "But is it customary? I didn't know you could."

"Oh, yes, plenty of sulphur and fire to light smokes on our side, you know. And we've got the ghosts of the makin's with us."

Each man produced his own favorite form of smoke, some cigarettes, some men black cigars, the negroes cheroots, while one ghost in work-stained overalls dug from his pocket a pipe with an extremely unpleasant odor. As each man put his smoke to his lips, a queer little will-o'-the-wisp floated up as lighter. It was an interesting phenomenon. Presently, as a strong and lifelike odor of tobacco pervaded the porch, wraiths of smoke drifted about us all.

Dave Billings said apologetically, "You must excuse this garb of ours, sister, for we ain't dressed for a party. But you know we can't carry trunks with us, as there ain't no baggage coach in the hereafter train."

"Yes, I understand that you have to keep wearing what you have on when you are ghosted," I said. "Ghosts always wear what they're last seen in in the flesh, though I've always thought that must be hard for some."

"Yes, ma'am!"—said Dave, emphatically. "I allus said I wanted to die with my boots on, so I wouldn't be ketched barefooted in the other world."

The man in overalls removed his unpleasant pipe and contributed to the discussion.

"It's kinder hard to be carried off before you get your Saturday night bath an' shave," he complained. "Look at me now,—I got to wear those duds forever and ever."

"Your garments certainly are germy, too, my good man!" put in a tart voice.

I looked around to see who had spoken, and found it was a woman dressed in a flannelette nightgown, a tall, thin woman with hair in curl papers, and with curious patches of court plaster all over her face.

"That's all right, lady," chuckled the pipe. "I got on my day clothes, anyhow. 'Tain't my nightshirt."

"How vulgar!" she froze. "As if it were my fault that I've got to go like this!"

"Tell me about it," I interposed pacifically.

"I was scared to death in the middle of the night," she explained bitterly. "A burglar broke into my room with a pistol and I died of heart failure. I was always a sensitive, high-strung soul! Of course, I didn't know I'd have to go through eternity in my night clothes, else I'd have borne up long enough to get into my kimona, at least. But here, I am, a modest woman. It's unfair "

"Were you in a hospital?" I asked sympathetically. "Had you been hurt in some accident, that you had those court-plasters on your face?"

"These are not wounds!" she said in refrigerated tones. "These are wrinkle eradicators!"

A round-faced, bald-headed ghost here pushed his chair forward a bit into the discussion. "I've thought a good deal about the rule making us wear our death-day clothes forever," he said. "Strikes me it's pretty hard on these chaps you sometimes read about, that die of heart failure in the bathtub."

"How unspeakably vulgar!" cried the wrinkle-eradicated one, drawing her flannelette skirts about her as if to depart.

"Oh, I'm sure they'd be allowed a sheet!" I suggested. "We read of sheeted ghosts, you see, and that must be the explanation. But what I'd

like to know is how those ghost clothes last so long. Why don't they ever wear out, or do they? Who darns the ghosts' socks?"

"Ghostly tissue has a method of renewing itself, both in clothes and in persons," said an aristocratic middle-aged shade lounging in the steamer chair, with a long, expensive-looking cigar in his mouth. "Many latter-day ghosts are very energetic in their habits, hence it is supposed that friction even of an ethereal kind would in the end wear out garments, but such is not the case."

"But think of the anguish of a fashionable woman compelled to wear an out-of-style dress!" I cried. "And fancy how Queen Elizabeth, for instance, must suffer, at leaving her thousand gowns behind and being restricted to one, that she'd wiped up the floor with, at that!"

"Yes," he conceded.

"But why hasn't some enterprising Yankee or Hebraic spook contrived to set up a clothing establishment on the other side? Mightn't asbestos be worn? Or at least, you might have an exchange of old clothes, so you could swap about occasionally."

"That might be worked out," he agreed thoughtfully. "But there are various difficulties."

"But, Mistis," the dark giant on the steps addressed the flannelette nightgown. "You ain't as bad off as I am, no ways. The wust thing in the world is to die hungry, to die in debt to yo' stummick! That's what done happened to me!"

He sat on the steps, hunched forward in his khaki uniform, his black face humbly mournful.

"Why, you poor thing!" I cried in pity. "Were you a prisoner of war?"

"No, Mistis, I was jes' in de army. Dey done sont us to de front-line trenches, an' I stayed dere a powerful long time. We didn't hab nothing to eat in de trenches but braid an' coffee, 'case dey couldn't get no supplies to us, on 'count ob de heaby firing. So I was near 'bout starbed, an' den I went an' got shell-shuck."

"Too bad!"

"Yes'm, hit sho' wus. Dey done tuck me to de horspital when dey git us out, an' one ob dem young internals, he says I was anemic, an' he put me on a low diet. It sho' was low, too! He say he got to buil' me up befo' I kin eat, an' I say how kin I buil' up less'n I eat?"

"And then?"

"Atter awhile dey done put me on a ship to bring me home. De doctor he say I kin eat all I wants

to on de ship, an' so es soon es I got on bo'd, I begin to plan my fust dinner. Dey say I kin hab whatever I wishes, an' so I done order sweet 'taters an' spareribs, an' pumpkin pie, an' batter bread an', an' you knows, Mistis!"

"Yes, I know. Go on."

He faltered a moment.

"I do hope you enjoyed them," I said.

"Naw, Mistis," he quavered. "When dat boat begin to trabble, an' dey brung my dinner to me, I got seasick. I ain' wan' my dinner. I ain' want what I is eat already! Mistis, I wus seasick clear cross de ocean! Dat shell-shuck shuck me up so, dat I couldn't assimilate my food at all. And I done pegged out jes' as de gangplank wus let down in New Yawk!"

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" I mourned. "Is there anything I could do for you?"

His black face lightened. "I tell you whut you kin do, Mistis. I kain' eat yo' sort ob food, but dere's a nigger grabeyard yan in de valley. If 'long 'bout twelve o'clock, you could put a water-millyon an' a Smithfiel' hamb bone an', an', you knows whut, Mistis, on one ob de graves dere, I think I could crope in an' sorter sperit hit away."

"I'll do it!" I agreed heartily.

"Thank you kindly, Mistis. I knowed you'd help ol' Ahash out."

"What is your name?" I asked.

"Ahashuerus, Mistis. But dey ginerally calls me Ahash for short, or jes' plain Hash."

"Where wus you fum?" inquired the colored boy beside him on the steps.

"I wus fum Savannah. Where wus you fum?"

"I wus fum Waco, Texas," he answered.

"Oh, were you?" I cried delightedly. "That's my old home. Tell me about it all!"

"Wellum, I done lib down on Waco Creek, an' I wus a shine boy fo' de young men in Baylor University."

"You know some of the shine reels, then?" I asked. "I used to hear the college men talk about them."

"Yes, Mistis."

"Sing some of them for us," I urged.

He hesitated. "Wellum, I ain' know eczackly whether hit's proper to sing reels atter you is dead. Dey putty nigh tu'ned me outen de church 'case I sung dem whilst I was libing. Lemme sing you some hymn chunes, Mistis!"

"Well, you can start off with a hymn," I compromised.

He drew from some shadowy somewhere the wraith of an old banjo, and began picking the strings reminiscently. As a weird melody stole forth, he began his chanting song:

“Some preachers, dey is preachin’
Jes’ for a preacher’s name,
But de doctrine dey is preachin’
Is scand’lous an’ a shame.

CHORUS:

Do you call dat religion? Oh, no!
Do you call dat religion? Oh, no!
Do you call dat religion? Oh, no!
Hit’s scan’lous an’ a shame.

An’ den we hab some deacons
Who sit in de rulin’ chair.
Dey duty is to see atter us,
But dey say dat dey don’ care.

CHORUS:

An’ den we hab some brothers
Dat’s giben to hab two wives,
An’ ef you spring dat question,
You’ll see dey dander rise.

CHORUS:

An’ den we hab some sisters
Who claim dey is very meek,

But dey pass by each other's do'
An' neber stop to speak.

CHORUS:

An' den we hab some members
Who are on de road to hell,
If dey're not wropped up in dis worl',
Dey'll say dey're not doin' well.

CHORUS:

Dey'll play dominoes an' checkers,
Play cards an' baseball too,
An' ef you try to correc' dem,
Dey'll say dey's es good es you.

CHORUS:

If dey hear dat you is sick,
You'll see dem slip an' dodge;
Dey won't come nigh to see you,
Ef you don' belong to dey lodge.

CHORUS:

When you are well an' wealthy,
So many are yo' frien's;
But when you get onhealthy,
Dey seldom will come in.

CHORUS:

De church folks will borrow money
An' promise sure to pay,

But when dey sees you comin',
Dey goes some odder way.

CHORUS:

Now you say you been converted,
Why don't you stop tellin' lies,
Stop drinkin' beer an' whisky,
An' be more civilized?"

CHORUS:

"Huh! I don't call dat a real hymn chune,"
protested Ahash.

"See if you kin do better, den!" sniffed Jake, of
Waco Creek.

"Yes, you give us a song, Ahash," I suggested.

Ahash produced a pair of bones from his pocket,
and gave premonitory clinkings, after which he
sang:

"When I swim de golden ribber in de mawnin',
When I swim de golden ribber in de mawnin',
Den I'll wear de golden slippers,
An' I'll flop de silver flippers,
When I swim de golden ribber in de mawnin'!

CHORUS:

When I swim de golden ribber, when I swim de gold-
en ribber,

When I swim de golden ribber in de mawnin',
 Den I hear my master callin',
 An' I'se gwine to come asquallin',
 When I swim de golden ribber in de mawnin'!

CHORUS

When I swim de golden ribber in de mawnin',
 When I swim de golden ribber in de mawnin',
 Den I'll dress in silk an' satin,
 An' I'll talk in Greek an' Latin,
 When I swim de golden ribber in de mawnin'!

CHORUS:

When I swim de golden ribber in de mawnin',
 When I swim de golden ribber in de mawnin',
 Ol' Satan'll build a fiah,
 An' he'all say to me, 'Come nighah,'
 When I swim de golden ribber in de mawnin'!

CHORUS:

When I swim de golden ribber in de mawnin',
 When I swim de golden ribber in de mawnin',
 Ef ol' Satan pesters me,
 Dere'll be a jamboree,
 When I swim de golden ribber in de mawnin'!

CHORUS:

When I swim de golden ribber in de mawnin',
 When I swim de golden ribber in de mawnin',
 Dere will be no corn nor cotton,
 All my trouble'll be forgotten,
 When I swim de golden ribber in de mawnin'!

CHORUS:

When I swim de golden ribber in de mawnin',
When I swim de golden ribber in de mawnin',
Dere'll be joy an' lots to eat,
Dere'll be bread an' lots ob meat,
When I swim de golden ribber in de mawnin'!"

CHORUS:

"Dat ain' no hymn proper. I calls dat a hymn-reel," grumbled Jake.

"What is that?" I asked.

"A hymn is a church chune. A reel is a comic chune. A hymn-reel is a comic church chune. Dey's bofe diff'rent from ballets."

"What are ballets?" I asked interestedly.

"A ballet is a story chune dat ain't 'ligious. A hymn-ballet is a story chune 'bouten Bible folks."

"Do you know any hymn ballets?"

"Yas'm."

"Can't you sing one for us?" I requested.

"I knows one 'bout Samson an' Delijah," admitted Jake.

"Let us hear it," I said cordially.

"Wellum." He hunched himself against the post, and twangled the strings of his ghostly guitar as he began to sing.

Delijah was a woman fine an' fair,
Pleasant-looking, wid coal-black hair.

Why he went to Timothy, I cannot tell,
But the daughter of Timothy pleased him well.
Samson tol' his father to go an' see
If he could get that beautiful woman for me.

Ef I had my way, Oh, Lordy, Lawd!
Ef I had my way,
I would tear de buildin' down!
Samson's mother replied to him,
'Why do you want to marry a Pallestine?
Why don't you marry a woman of your own kith an'
kin?'

Let me tell you what Samson done.
He broke at de lion, an' de lion run.
It was written dat the lion killed de man wid his jaw.
Wasn't Samson de first man de lion attackted?
Samson caught de lion an' got on his back.
Den Samson hab his han' in de lion's jaw.

Samson killed de lion; long atter de lion was dead,
Bees made honey in de lion's head.
Samson put fo'th a riddle, an' de riddle was guessed
in seben days
He would put forth a feast.
In seben days Samson's riddle was not in view.

Pallestines tol' Samson's wife,
Ask him if he really pleased to tell hit to thee.
On the sebenth day befo' de sun went down,
Pallestines ask Samson what was stronger dan lion,
What was sweeter dan honey.

Samson went to town to stay too late.
Dey want to kill Samson as dey lay in wait.
But Samson was very strong.
He pulled up de gatepos' an' carried hit along.
Samson burned down de fiel' ob cawn.
When dey look fo' Samson, he was gone!

Three thousand men begun to plot.
Fo' very long, ol' Samson was caught.
Dey boun' him down while walkin' along,
An' he tuck an ol' jawbone.
Samson moved his arm, an' de rope popped like
thread.
When Samson got through slayin', three thousand
was dead.

Read about Samson fum his birth,
De strongest man dat libed on earth.
Read way back in ancient times
When he killed three thousand Pallestines.

Samson's wife sot down on his knee.
'Say where do your strength lie, please tell hit to me.'
She talked so fair, Samson say, 'Jes' cut off my hair,
Shave my head as clean as yo' han',
Den my strength will be as a natural man.'"

He paused apologetically, "Deys mo' to hit but
you mought get tired of hit all."

"Very interesting," I commented. "Now can
you give us a regular ballet?"

"I'll gib you one 'bouten Frankie. Hit's a favorite one in Texas." And he relayed the woes of dusky Frankie:

"Frankie was a good girl, as everybody knows. Frankie sabed her money to buy her man some clo'se. Oh, he's her man, but he done her wrong!

Frankie went to de bar to get a bottle ob beer. Said, 'Mr. Bartender, hab my man Albert been here? Oh, he's my man, but he done me wrong!'

Said Mr. Bartender, 'Miss Frankie, I ain' gwine tell you no lies. I seen yore man Albert wid dat Sarah Slies. Oh, he's yore man, but de done you wrong!'

Frankie went home to get a gun, An' she shot her man Albert wid his own forty-one. Oh, he was her man, but he done her wrong!

'Turn me ober, Frankie, turn me ober slow. Turn me ober, Frankie, fo' dat bullet hurts me so. Oh, I'm yore man, but I done you wrong.'

An' den dey put po' Albert In a bran' new livery hack, An' dey took him to de grabeyard, But dey never brought him back. Oh, he was her man, but he done her wrong!'"

Here we were interrupted by a thin whisper of a voice. "I think entirely too much attention is being paid to those colored persons!"

As I looked toward the spot from which the sound came, I saw a ghost as thin as a piece of paper. "Who are you, my friend?" I asked. "And what happened to you—a landslide?"

"No," he said in a knife-like voice. "I had to ride in the New York subway at the rush hours. I assumed this shape by degrees, till one day my breath left me altogether, because it had no room at all."

"I know how it feels! I've been there myself!" I murmured sympathetically.

A husky voice spoke up from the couch, and I looked round to see a man in fur overcoat, with his collar turned up. "I froze to death during war times!" he hoarsed. "And I don't know whether to haunt Garfield or my landlord. Whenever I go at one, he refers me to the other, and each turns a cold shoulder to me!"

"Aren't there—warm regions—you could thaw out in?" I questioned tentatively.

"They won't let me into Hell, for fear I'd lower the temperature too much," he said.

As he spoke the words dropped in icicles from

his lips and fell to the floor with a rattle. Tears froze on his cheeks.

"What you need is a ghost union," broke in a burly voice with a soap box accent. "You never can get your rights by yourself. Organize, organize—that's the thing! Then we'll have those mortals on the run."

"Is there a ghost union?" I asked breathlessly.

"No, but there ought to be. I'm a walking delegate now to work it up. The ghosts are mobilizing and we'll straighten out things. We'll get our hours standardized, demand extra pay for day work, have proper conditions for haunting arranged, and get things going our way. If we ever get industrially democratized, the live ones won't have the chance of a ghost to resist us."

"You have such common sentiments, my good man," put in an aristocratic ghost in the wicker chair. "You speak as if all ghosts belonged to the laboring classes."

"And don't you haunt any yourself?" sneered the soap box.

"Certainly not. I have my ghost to do that."

"Your ghost?" I cried incredulously. "Does a ghost have a ghost?"

"Assuredly," he responded. "Going without your ghost would be like getting along without your valet—possible, of course, for simple-minded souls, but extremely undesirable. I have my ghost to do my haunting for me."

"But where does he come from?" I queried, with more curiosity than politeness.

"The ghosts of strong personalities are so much alive that they have their own ghosts," he explained. "A ghost once removed is a more pallid specter, but quite active. Here, James," he called into the shadow, and an unsubstantial wraith came forward.

"I've got no use for stuck-up spooks that keep body ghosts," growled the unpleasant pipe.

I hastily interposed, to prevent friction, and turned to Jake. "Can't you give us another reel or ballet?"

He picked tentatively at his banjo, leaned his head back against the white column, and sang of the Boston Burglar, his rich notes throbbing through the air.

"There goes a Boston burglar,
All wrapped in iron an' bound.
For great, guilty crimes he's done,
He's bound for Huntsville town."

("Huntsville is de place where a penitentiary is, in Texas," Jake informed the uninitiate.)

"Boys who have their liberty,
Pray keep it if you can.
When you get to de age of twenty or twenty-three,
Don't go to de penitentiary!"

Here Ahashuerus stirred jealously. "I know one 'bout de *Titanic*, Mistis," he suggested.

"All right, give it to us," I said. "But wait a minute till I get some phonograph records and capture these songs for the folklore society."

Presently the rolling melodies poured into the machine.

"It was in the year nineteen hundred an' twelve,
On April the fourteenth day,
When de great *Titanic* struck a iceberg,
An' de people hab to run an' pray.

CHORUS:

God moved on de waters, God moved on de waters,
God moved on de waters,
An' de people had to run' an' pray.

While the guards who had been watchin'.
Were asleep fo' dey was tired,
Dey heard de great excitement,
An' many guns was fired.

CHORUS:

Some people had to leabe dey happy homes,
An' all dat dey possessed.
Lawd Jesus, will you hear us,
Hear us in our distress?

CHORUS:

When de captain gib his orders,
It was women an' children first;
Many lifeboats was let down,
An' many libes was crushed.

CHORUS:

Some women had to leave dey loved ones,
An' flee fo' de safest place.
But when dey seen dey loved ones drown,
Dey hearts did almost break.

CHORUS:

The survivors in general did escape to de lan',
Dey lives dey tried to save.
But de torture an' de price dey paid fo' life
Is a warnin' to ebery man brave.

CHORUS:

Watchers' hearts on de boats was touched,
An' dey eyes was moved to tears,
When widows inquired ob dey loved ones,
Wid nothin' in dey hearts but fears.

CHORUS:

It's bes' to stay away fum de ocean,
De dry ol' lan' am de best.
Fo' den you don't get drownded,
When you lay down to rest."

CHORUS:

"I know one 'bouten de *Titanic*, too!" broke in Jake.

"Let us have it," I responded, and he tuned his banjo again.

"Come, all you people, ef you want to know
Something dat happened not so long ago.
I guess yo' heard bout dat misteree,
Bout de *Titanic* sankin' in de deep, blue sea.
Dey was people on dat ship
Had Elgin movement in dey hip.
Captain Smith had de worry-blues.
I got de *Titanic* movement in my hip,
Wid a twenty-year guarantee.
I ain't good-lookin' an' I don't dress fine,
But I angles in my hips, an' I'm goin' to take my
time!"

A new voice crisped in on Jake's song, as a sprucely dressed specter pointed index finger at the banjoist. "That darkey ought to have lessons from an efficiency expert. He wastes half his motions picking the banjo. He could get twice

as much tune for the same amount of energy, if he didn't sway back and forth, and pat his feet, and roll his eyes as he does."

"Are you an efficiency expert?" I asked.

"Yes. I am carrying over into the other side the modern American business methods. There's been too much waste haunting in the past, but I'm revolutionizing the ghost world. In these days, what with his general haunting, as well as attending those meetings of the Spiritualists, and the Psychical Research societies, the modern ghost is overworked. He has no time to loaf. The person that thinks of the hereafter as a long rest misses his guess. Nowadays the ghost sees his duty and does it promptly, and there's no shilly-shallying about his methods. He is getting up on the knowledge of efficiency and conserves his energy, so he makes no false motions. I expect to improve on the mortal methods presently, and then I'm coming back to haunt business offices and factories on earth, to make them reform."

"It's interesting to know that you have such liberty of motion," I commented. "The old-fashioned ghosts were tied at home more."

"That wouldn't be possible now," he said. "Because, suppose we were restricted to certain

houses as in the past? Modern houses are torn down so quickly, and where would the poor ghosts be then? Neither could we haunt certain families, for people move about so much now and never stay in the same place."

I heard a scuffling over in a dark corner, and saw two ghosts pummeling each other vigorously.

"Come! Come!" I cried. "Who are you, and what are you fighting about?"

"We are a duplex personality ghost," they said in a sulky voice. "And we don't get along well together."

"Obviously not," I retorted. "Are there many of your kind?"

"Oh, yes," they answered, glaring at each other. "There are even some multiple ghosts, which are worse off. Some complex people now insist on having half a dozen ghosts."

"I wonder what sort of living man you were," I mused. "I'm always looking at people and wondering what sort of ghosts they will make, and now it is the other way about."

"It's like having two suits of clothes," answered the duplex. "Nobody wants to wear the same personality all the time. Some folks have ghosts to suit all their moods."

I had noticed a little girl ghost who sat in the corner without speaking, silently wiping her eyes.

"Who are you, dear, and what are you crying for?" I asked her solicitously.

"I don't like to tell," she whimpered. "I've always felt unnatural, but I couldn't help myself!"

"What did you die of, child?"

"I was worked to death!" she sobbed. "Everybody made me work. Day and night I had to slave, doing things no child is expected to do. I had to look after grown people and run things in general, and reform the world, instead of just being a natural child. It killed me!" She burst into a wail of rebellion.

"Where did you live?" I insisted.

She leaned over the porch edge to let her tears drip down on the flower bed. "I didn't really live anywhere. I was just in books. I was the *gl-a-a-ad* child! And I'm glad I'm dead!"

"I agree with you!" I cried. "You *were* an unnatural little prig, and it's to be hoped you're *very* dead!"

The scholar stirred pensively in his easy-chair. "It strikes me," he observed thoughtfully, "that a number of other literary types have been done to death. But the public doesn't know it, so they

have to go on, making a false show of life. I think this ghost congress in session should take steps to insist on the rights of dead things to be dead."

"For instance?" I asked with interest.

"Well, the compulsory happy ending to the American short story, for one thing, and for another, the dismal end to the Russian story. No wonder the Russians have had revolution after revolution, if that is what they have been fed up on."

"You're right," brisked the efficiency expert. "Now, what we need to do is to appoint a committee of the whole to haunt the editors, and whoever is responsible for such practices. Editorial pillows are accessible to ghosts."

At that, all the ghosts who had ever tried to write a short story—and most of them had!—rose in concert, clamoring to be appointed to go at once. They made so much noise that the hounds came rushing out of their kennel, ululating joyously, in the hope that a fox hunt was being started. When the pack reached the front of the house and caught a glimpse of the personnel of the party, they put their terrified tails between their legs and howled back to the kennel.

When the clamor had subsided, Dave Billings

remarked mournfully, "Dogs don't like us. But that there bird, now, he says this is his kind of party."

And the little screech owl, sitting in the oak tree by the porch, tremuloed grievously that it did.

"Ghosts has a hard time in these days," gloomed the overalls. "It's worse in cities than in the country, even. All the big houses now employ ghost exterminators who keep ghosts out of a building, just as they do vermin exterminators. Insurance companies will insure against being haunted too, though the rates are pretty high."

"It's hard being hunted about as we are," agreed the frozen spirit. "People hate us as they do germs. There should be an asylum for infirm and dependent spooks."

"I've always wondered if a germ didn't feel sensitive," I mused. "It must be dreadful to know that people boil themselves to avoid contact with you."

"And another thing there ought to be is a ghost exchange," growled the pipe. "This thing of forever being yourself gets my ghost."

"Yes, why can't we socialize and swap haunts at will?" agreed the soap box.

"Don't ask me to exchange personalities with you!" the flannelette nightgown said coldly.

"No, lady, I won't," he grunted sarcastically.

"That idea appears to me a feasible one," meditated the scholar. "A general transfer of ghosts after death would be satisfactory. Persons who in life have yearned to be different—and who hasn't?—could change their temperaments. Meek little rabbit men could be prize fighters, and hen-pecked husbands could be wife beaters. One-legged men could win Marathon races, and homely women could become beauties."

"Sir!" broke in the spinster. "Are your remarks intended to be personal?"

"Oh, no, madam!" he assured her, with one imperturbable glance at her face.

I looked about hastily for some excuse for interruption, and spied a harassed-looking shade sitting by himself on the edge of a chair.

"I don't believe I have heard your death history," I said.

He glanced uneasily about him. "I'm haunted by a living person!" he whispered, in frightened tones.

"Tell me about it!" I exclaimed. "That's most extraordinary."

"It's very irregular," he agreed dolefully. "He's a reporter for a yellow newspaper, and he wants to interview a ghost. He haunts me night and day. I can't lie down in the day to sleep that I don't wake to find him squatting by my pillow. I won't be written up in his wretched sheet! I won't! I won't!"

"What do you do when he speaks to you?" I asked sympathetically.

"I pretend I'm a deaf and dumb ghost. I talk on my fingers to him. But he's off now learning the finger alphabet, and whatever shall I do when he comes back? I don't really *know* the alphabet myself, though," he concluded with a shade of hopefulness.

"He's liable to hunt up the ghost of a fountain-pen and ask you to write to him," pessimistically put in the aristocrat.

"Fountain pens don't have ghosts. They're devils," the scholar answered emphatically.

"Jake, rattle your banjo and give us another little tune to cheer this friend up," I suggested.

"I don' reckon you ever played craps, is you, Mistis?" Jake asked.

"No," I answered. "Tell me about it."

"Wellum, hit's disaway. When we throws

craps an' hit falls de same fo' you an' fo' me, we calls hit a hawss an' a hawss. Yas'm, I don' know what dat means. Hit's jes' a term o' speakin'. When hit's mo' fo' one dan fo' de odder, we says hit's a hawss on me, or on you."

"A hawss an' a flea an' a little mice
Was settin' in de corner shakin' dice.
De hawss foot slipped, an' he fell on de flea.
De flea say, 'Dat's a hawss on me!'"

Dave Billings sprang up briskly, saying, "I move we shove these chairs back and have a dance. No telling what time we'll ever get together at a party again, and we better make hay while the moon shines. Jake and Ahash, stir up some jig for us, and let's have a time."

He clutched the spinster round the waist and fairly swung her off her feet, as Jake and Ahash struck up the tune of

"Chicken in de bread tray,
Pickin' up de dough.
Granny, will your dog bite?
No, chile, no!"

Dave's dancing was a joyous sight. He would spring up into the air at intervals, cracking his

heels together, and making the little bells jingle merrily. The whole party was on the floor as "Weevily Wheat" sounded, and when Jake and Ahash played "Skip-to-my-Lou" the excitement was intensified. The Garfield ghost and the glad child mingled their tears, and the subway shade danced alone, being too diaphanous for even ghostly touch.

As a pause came in the music, Dave Billings wiped the cold perspiration from his face with a red handkerchief, and said, "It's getting late. We'd better stir the dust toward home."

"The tyranny of the dark, the autocratic rule of ghost curfew is abolished now. Shades may come out when they please," argued the scholar.

"And anyhow, there's no reliability to be placed on the clocks any more," complained the spinster. "They skip a whole hour or drop back one most curiously. Sometimes, when I come out at twelve o'clock to haunt, I find it's only eleven by the clock, and people are still awake. And other times when I've started home at cock-crow, I've found myself on the streets in my nightgown when people were starting out. It's like those wretched dreams that living people have."

"Anyhow, it's time we went home and let this

lady get some sleep," insisted Dave. "If we wait much longer it'll be too light for us to see the way home. I pretty near stepped on a frog as it was, comin' up the hill."

"What sort of frog?" I sprang up excitedly.

"Smallish kind of ord'nary little frog," returned Dave. "It hopped in front of me all the way up the hill."

"Did it have a little hair line of white down the middle of its back? And could it walk as well as hop? Was it a friendly little frog?" I cried in agitation.

"Search me!" Dave looked blank.

"Oh, I thought maybe it was a little frog that I loved very much once. I thought maybe it had come back with the rest of you, because, you see, it's a little dead frog."

Dave looked embarrassed. "I'd a cotched it for you if I'd known you wanted it."

"Show me where you saw it last!" I cried eagerly.

He led the way to the shadowy shrubbery, where I looked longingly into the boskage, calling, "Nip, oh, Nip!"

But no answer came.

The screech owl whimpered piteously above me

as I searched in vain, and far back in the kennel the hounds howled lugubriously.

"Come on away, you guys, an' let the lady find her frog," gruffed the pipe.

"Good-bye!" they called softly to me, as they passed down the walk.

"Come again!" I called, at which they chorused, "We will!"

"Thank you for a pleasant evening!" called the spinster.

"Count on a woman's getting the ghost of the last word!" growled the soap box.

Dave Billings herded his ghosts together and drove them before him down the hill, shouting:

"Git along, little dogies!
Quit your milling around!"

As I still searched futilely among the bushes, I could hear an eerie echo from away over by the lake, the crooning of a cowboy ballad:

"Bury me not on the lone prairie,
Where the wild coyote shall howl over me!"

**This book is under no circumstances to be
taken from the Building**

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